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THEOLOGICAL WORKS,

PUBLISHED AT DIFFERENT TIMES,

AND NOW COLLECTED INTO VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

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1810

THEOLOGICAL WORKS,

PUBLISHED AT DIFFERENT TIMES,

AND NOW COLLECTED INTO VOLUMES.

BY THOMAS SCOTT,

RECTOR OF ASTON SANDFORD, BUCKS.

VOL. IV.

A DISCOURSE UPON REPENTANCE.
THE WARRANT AND NATURE OF FAITH IN CHRIST.
A TREATISE ON GROWTH IN GRACE.
HINTS FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF PATIENTS IN HOSPITALS.
DETACHED PAPERS.
A FAMILY PRAYER.

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OF

THE FOURTH VOLUME.

A Discourse upon Repentance.

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A

DISCOURSE

UPON

REPENTANCE.

THE SEVENTH EDITION.

And they went forth, and preached that men should repent.
Mark vi. 12.

PREFACE.

THE importance of the subject treated of, and the rank which it holds in the word of God, among the doctrines and duties of christianity; the backwardness of mankind to attend to it, in proportion to that importance; and an apprehension that it is not insisted on, either from the pulpit or the press, so frequently and strenuously in our times, as it was in the days of the apostles; form, collectively, the reasons which induced me to this publication. Much ignorance, and various hurtful and perplexing mistakes and difficulties, about repentance, may be observed, both amongst professors of serious godliness and others: I therefore thought, that it might not be unseasonable, or unprofitable, to publish a discourse upon the subject.

My first intention was only to send to the press the substance of a sermon, I had repeatedly preached; but the same reasons influenced me, upon mature consideration, to complete the design, as far as I was capable; though the size and price are both by that means increased.

Some passages may be judged to bear hard upon certain popular sentiments, and current species of religion. I have indeed very plainly spoken my mind respecting several things, which I am convinced are detrimental to the cause of pure religion: but I hope, I have not transgressed the rules of meekness and candour. Even wise and good men, in their zeal for one part of divine truth, may drop unguarded expressions, that *bear an interpretation* injurious to another part of equal importance; and thus, undesignedly, by their reputation give sanction to error. This our artful and watchful enemy will be sure to observe, and make his advantage of, in opposing true religion; by which some may be deceived, others hardened and religion itself exposed to contempt and reproach.

It behoves then other friends of religion, who are witnesses of such perversions, to oppose and obviate them: nor must the reputation of some, or the censure of others, among their fellow-servants be regarded, when the glory of God, the interests of religion, and the salvation of souls, are at stake. Were some pious men, now in glory, to return on earth, and witness the abuse that has been made of certain indiscreet expressions they employed, they would be the first to approve every endeavour to counteract their fatal tendency. With all plainness and freedom I would plead the cause of truth and holiness; but would give no *needless* offence to any man. May that God, whom I would "serve with my spirit, in the gospel "of his Son," powerfully succeed this feeble attempt to promote his glory in the salvation of souls.

OLNEY, *Feb.* 2, 1785.

Preface to the Sixth Edition.

MORE than eighteen years having now elapsed, since this discourse was first published; and the Author having in that time had much opportunity of comparing what he had written, both with the Scriptures, and with the state of religion at present; after carefully revising the work; he thinks it incumbent on him to annex to this sixth edition a declaration, that he is more than ever convinced, that the real nature of true repentance is here described; that there can be no saving faith where this repentance is wanting; that many false views of christianity may be detected by this touchstone; and that the necessity and nature of true repentance are generally too little insisted on, in evangelical instructions.

THOMAS SCOTT.

ASTON SANDFORD,
April 19, 1803.

INTRODUCTION.

THE christian religion, as St. Paul preached it both to Jews and Gentiles, consist sof "repentance towards "God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ," and may therefore be properly called the religion of a sinner; for none but sinners need repentance, or faith in a Mediator, or that forgiveness of sins, which through him is preached to all that believe.

This consideration ought carefully to be attended to; Jesus Christ "came not to call the righteous, but "sinners to repentance;" and if men lose sight of this peculiarity of the gospel, they will mistake in a fundamental concern; and be offended with those ministers, who alone address them in a scriptural method. Our business, as preachers of the gospel, is not with men merely as rational agents, but with men as sinners. We must not address them, as if they were newly entered on a state of trial; were as yet free from all blame; and were at last to stand or fall according to their future good or bad behaviour, and only needed to be instructed in their duty, and excited to perform it. This is not the state of the case. Even the most moral, respectable, and amiable of mankind are *sinners*, condemned sinners. In this light the word of God

considers us, and informs us, (not "What good thing "we may do to inherit eternal life," but) "What we "must do to be saved" from impending ruin; whither a sinner "may flee from the wrath to come." And thus must the faithful minister address his hearers, calling upon them as sinners, to repent and believe the gospel.

"By one man sin entered into the world, and death "by sin; and so death passed upon all men."* In consequence of the awful sentence, "Dust thou art, "and to dust thou shalt return," millions through successive generations have yielded to the stroke: all the former inhabitants of the earth are swept into the grave by one general execution: many are at this moment experiencing the agonies of death: numbers are bewailing their departed and departing friends and relatives.—We too feel the consequences of sin in our own personal pains and sickness, which are the forerunners and earnests of our dissolution: we too must have the sentence executed upon us in all its rigour. The wisest cannot elude it, the strongest cannot resist its stroke, nor can the richest purchase exemption from it.

The constant and extensive ravages of death are in themselves extremely affecting to the considerate spectator: but become more so when we reflect, that as certainly as when a malefactor is dragged from prison, and executed on a scaffold, he dies for breaking the laws of the land; so certainly, when a sinner dies, he dies for breaking the law of God.

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* Rom. v. 12.

Had sin and death been hitherto equally unknown to mankind; and now in our days had sin first made its entrance: immediately upon man's rebellion had we heard the sentence audibly and solemnly denounced; "Dust ye are, and to dust ye shall return:" had fevers, dropsies, palsies, apoplexies, consumptions, and other mortal diseases on the one hand; with earthquakes, famines, and wars on the other, suddenly begun to spread desolation through families, villages, cities, and kingdoms, among the guilty alone: should we behold at once multitudes dead, and multitudes in the agonies of death, the rest mourning over their beloved friends, and trembling for themselves; (like Egypt when there was not a house, in which there was not one dead:) the connexion betwixt transgressing the divine law, and being punished with death, might be more affecting, but would not be more certain, than it now is; though it is seldom seriously laid to heart.

Or were men in general free from sin; but from time to time one and another transgressed; who immediately upon transgressing, was punished by death, according to the examples of vindictive justice recorded in the scriptures: the connexion would be more attended to, but not more certain than at present; when, "because sentence against an evil work is not executed "*speedily*, therefore the heart of the sons of men is "wholly set in them to do evil."*

But as all have sinned, and all die, and things have gone on so for many generations, death is considered

* Eccles. viii. 11.

as a thing of course: we live in the midst of its devastations without horror, or uneasy reflections; and enquire little why it is so? or what the consequence will be? Like soldiers, who grow inured to scenes of blood, and insensible to dangers, through being familiar with them.

But this, solemn and alarming as it is, forms only a small part of the sentence of condemnation which we lie under. Our Lord warns us, "not to "fear them that kill the body, and after that have "no more that they can do, but to fear him who "is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." In comparison with this effect of divine wrath, the worst that men can do to us, is not, in the judgment of the Son of God, worthy of our fear. Yet the bare recital of those tortures, which the cruelty of man hath invented and inflicted in killing the body, is sufficient to chill our very blood: how dreadful therefore must they have been to those who endured them! And what must that misery be, compared with which the other is not worth a fear? Yet to this awful destruction every sinner is condemned, for breaking the law, and rebelling against the authority, of his Creator.

Imagine to yourselves a company of condemned criminals in a dungeon. A warrant arrives,—one is taken from them, they see him no more; know not what becomes of him; and do not readily believe any reports which reach them of the tortures he endured, and the pains he suffered; another is thus taken from them, and another. The remainder still suppose that their companions are only released from the miseries of a dungeon; and expect their own turn merely as a similar deliverance. All this time, however, certain messen-

gers from the king earnestly persuade them to submit, ask forgiveness, and accept of mercy. A few are prevailed upon, and dismissed; but the rest seeing no difference betwixt those who are taken from them by a warrant, and those who are set at liberty with a pardon, persist in their obstinacy, and treat all persuasion with neglect and contempt.

This is the exact representation of the condition men are in. Death removes our friends and neighbours, one by one: we see not how they fare in another world; nor are we disposed to believe that "they lift up their "eyes in hell, being in torments;" (though this is indeed the awful condition of all who die impenitent.) Our turn will shortly come; but we are seldom duly apprehensive about the consequences. "All things "happen alike to all; as dieth the sinner, so dieth the "righteous:" each is released from the evils of life; faith alone can follow the one to heaven, and the other to hell: but all men have not faith; therefore most treat with neglect and contempt the preachers of the gospel, who inform them of their danger, and in God's name call upon them to repent, believe, and be saved.

But, beloved, though much grieved and discouraged by this neglect, we must not desist, nor would we despair of success. Let me beseech you then to keep in your mind these solemn and important truths, whilst with all seriousness, earnestness, and tender compassion, I address you as condemned sinners, in danger of eternal misery. We must take God's part against you, and vindicate his justice in that awful sentence he hath denounced: but we can sympathize with you, and weep over you, and "long after you in the bowels of

" Jesus Christ." We also were involved in the same guilt, and under the same condemnation; we were equally secure and obstinate in sin, and equally negligent of salvation. But being now, through God's mercy, made sensible of our guilt and danger; and having upon repentance found forgiveness, and enjoying the hopes and first-fruits of eternal happiness, we are desirous our fellow-sinners should share our deliverance, and experience our felicity.

To be instrumental to the salvation of your souls, my fellow-sinners, is all to which the true minister of Christ aspires. However your minds may be blinded by the god of this world, we see your danger, and mourn over your delusion. Your fondness for perishing vanities, and disregard to your eternal interest, excite our compassion; and would excite our indignation and astonishment, had not we too been equally sottish. Of the worth of your souls, the danger they are exposed to, the preciousness of salvation, and the happiness of being truly religious, we are deeply convinced. " We have believed, and therefore speak:" and though in ourselves unworthy and insufficient; yet being entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation, " we are now ambassadors for Christ, and as " though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, " in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God."

The most high God hath prepared a royal feast; all things are ready, rich abundance of provisions, and plenty of room! We are sent to invite the guests, and are directed to " compel them to come in." We would therefore invite, exhort, expostulate, warn, persuade, and command, with all tenderness and au-

thority, and not take a denial. Blame not, I beseech you, our earnestness; be not disgusted or offended with our importunity; do not pray us to have you excused; do not overwhelm us with discouragement, and send us to give, with tears, an account of our ill success. Our love to your immortal souls, our longing after your everlasting happiness, constrain us to be thus troublesome and importunate. Nay, though you frown, insult, threaten, and persecute, we must persist, so long as there is the shadow of a hope. "We "must not be overcome of evil, but overcome evil "with good." And at last, "if ye will not hear; we "must weep in secret places for your pride;" after his example, who wept over ungrateful Jerusalem.

To the true believer, careless sinners appear like intoxicated persons in a house which is on fire; who must be consumed in the flames, unless they can be induced to come forth, though themselves are utterly insensible of the danger. You may think yourselves secure, and make yourselves merry with our fears: but your awful infatuation, and imminent danger, are so manifest to us, that we must persist in our endeavours to convince you, so long as you are on this side of everlasting burnings. Thus Noah was treated by the inhabitants of the old world, and Lot even by his sons in law, with neglect and contempt, when they warned them of their danger; but too late they found their warnings true: and so will you find our's when death and judgment come, should you now slight them. "Because I called, and ye refused; I stretched "out my hand, and no man regarded; I also will laugh "at your calamity, and mock when your fear com-

" eth,"* saith the Lord himself.—But I would rise superior to such discouraging apprehensions, and expect better success in this feeble attempt to call sinners to repentance: humbly hoping that God will hear my prayers, and employ this discourse as his instrument in that blessed work.

When John the Baptist began his ministry, he preached; " Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is " at hand." The blessed Jesus also began to preach; " Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." " And the apostles went forth, and preached that men " should repent." After the resurrection of Christ, they were commissioned to " preach repentance and " forgiveness of sins to all nations, beginning at Je- " rusalem." Accordingly, Peter preached to the Jews, " Repent ye, and be converted, that your sins " may be blotted out." Paul in like manner addressed the Gentiles; " God commandeth all men every " where, to repent;" and informed them, " that men " should repent, and turn to God, and do works meet " for repentance."

From these, and many other testimonies of the word of God, judge ye, beloved, of the importance and certainty of our subject. No matter of trivial concern which may safely be disregarded, or of doubtful disputation which may plausibly be gainsayed or questioned, now demands our attention. But a subject of equal evidence with the word of " God who cannot " lie," and of importance proportioned to the interests of eternal ages.

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* Prov. i. 24—26.

Hear me then, I beseech you, with candour and attention: lay aside prejudice and levity, whilst with all seriousness and plainness I discourse concerning, 1. The necessity of repentance. 2. The nature of repentance. 3. The encouragement given to repentance. 4. The proper season for repentance; and 5. The means to be used in repenting.—For the love of thy soul, I beseech thee, sinner: and as thou wilt answer it at the day of judgment, I charge it upon thy conscience, to lay this matter home to thy heart, as in the sight of God; at the same time beseeching him to make thee partaker "of that repentance, which is unto "salvation, not to be repented of."

PART I.

CONCERNING THE NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE.

BEFORE we enter more fully upon the subject, I would premise, that I choose the word *Necessity*, as the most comprehensive which occurs to my mind: and I would be understood to intend by 'the necessi-'ty of repentance:' 1. The urgency of the case: sinners must either repent, or perish: 2. The reasonableness of repentance: having done wrong we ought to repent, and act most unreasonably if we do not: 3. The obligation sinners are under to repent, both from this reasonableness of the injunction, and the authority of that God who enjoins it: and 4. The additional guilt contracted by impenitency. As the same arguments frequently prove the necessity of repentance in more than one of these senses, I thought it would better prevent needless repetition, and obscurity in point of method, to treat of the whole at once, than to divide them into different heads. Having thus stated the meaning of the term employed, to prevent ambiguity, and that all may know what we say and whereof we affirm, let us proceed to the proof.

And here, reader, I have no need to enquire into thy character, whether thou art moral or immoral, a

sober man or a drunkard, a good or bad relation or member of society, a formal worshipper or profane. Granting all that any man can desire, supposing the character of the reader to be decent, amiable, and respectable amongst men, I will endeavour to shew him, and to shew all, their need of repentance.

I. " Because all have sinned, and come short of the " glory of God."—Few in comparison are acquainted with the extent, strictness, and spirituality of the law of God, as taking cognizance of every thought, word, action, intention, or disposition of the whole heart and life; requiring absolute perfection in all things, continued in even to the last moment of life. Few keep an exact account of their own thoughts, words, and actions, with reference to this law, as the standard of duty and sin: consequently few are sensible in any tolerable degree how numerous, or rather how innumerable, their transgressions are. But most, or all know, that in some instances they have offended God, by doing those actions which he hath forbidden, and leaving undone those which he hath commanded. Surely, reader, thy conscience will excuse me from further evincing this particular. Only listen to this faithful monitor: even now it arraigns, accuses, and condemns thee: and wert thou guilty only of one transgression, (instead of those millions, which are noted in God's book of remembrance,) and shouldest thou die without repenting of that one sin: as surely as conscience now condemns thee, so surely will God condemn thee in that solemn day, " when he shall " judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." " For

" if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our " heart, and knoweth all things."

One felony or murder fully proved ensures condemnation, equally with ten thousand. " Therefore, by " the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God;" because all have sinned: " And by " the law is the knowledge of sin." It takes cognizance of, and condemns, every sin and every sinner; and consequently can justify none, who have once transgressed. But remember, that the number and heinousness of our transgressions, though they add nothing to the *certainty*, yet will add proportionably to the *greatness*, of the merited condemnation; and should add to the depth of our repentance. Could that man be found who had once, and but once, and in the smallest instance, failed of obedience, he would need repentance, it would be his duty, nor could he be saved in impenitence. How needful then repentance for him, whose sins exceed in number the hairs of his head, and equal the moments of his life! For him, whose crimes are full of aggravation, and loudly cry for vengeance!

II. The law we have broken is " holy, just and " good."—There are laws in this land, which condemn the murderer and housebreaker to death. These are reasonable laws, of which none can disapprove, but those who are, or would be, guilty of those crimes. We experience them to be the security of our persons, property, and repose. He, who breaks these laws, is not only condemned by *them*, but in the judgment of every wise and honest man; and ought

in reason to condemn himself like the penitent thief, allowing the justice of the punishment he suffers.*

But Nebuchadnezzar made a law, commanding all his officers and servants to worship a golden image, on penalty of being cast into a furnace of fire: Darius made a law, forbidding any of his subjects to worship God for thirty days, on pain of being cast into the den of lions: and many such laws have the tyranny, caprice, and pride of imperious princes and rulers produced. They are, however, evidently absurd and impious, and every man will abhor them in proportion to his wisdom and goodness. The three pious Jews, who broke Nebuchadnezzar's edict, and Daniel who transgressed that of Darius, were indeed condemned by the laws; but they have been admired for their courage, and constancy in *disobedience*, by all good men ever since. Nay, the very consciences of their enemies testified for them, that they had done nothing amiss. Nor would it have been right for them to have condemned themselves; but rather they might glory in serving God, and keeping a good conscience, in the face of danger and death.

Were the law of God in any degree like those oppressive edicts, we should have cause to be extremely grieved at the hardship put upon us, and alarmed at the sentence denounced against us: but we could not, with any propriety, condemn ourselves, or repent of our transgressions.

We ought not indeed to reply against God: but the absurdity of this presumption arises not so much from

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* Luke xxiii. 41.

the consideration of his irresistable power and uncontroulable sovereignty, as from that of the absolute perfection of his justice and holiness. This we are bound humbly to allow and suppose, even when we cannot perceive it; and to silence all our rising objections by saying, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Yet God condescended himself to argue the matter with those, who thought his ways unequal: he even proposes his conduct in his own government of the world to our consideration, that we may see and adore his justice; and to our imitation, that we may be holy as he is holy: and the day of judgment will clear up all our difficulties, when the righteousness of God will be fully demonstrated, to the universal satisfaction of his holy creatures, and the confusion and silence of all his enemies. It is indeed blasphemy, to suppose God's law unreasonable, and his government oppressive: but it is a blasphemy congenial to our depraved nature, of which in our hearts we are all guilty, and of which we are with difficulty cured; for "the carnal mind is "enmity against God,—is not subject to the law of "God, neither indeed can be."

As therefore no sinner can be truly penitent till he is convinced that the law of God is holy, just, and good; we should first establish this point, in endeavouring to bring sinners to repentance. This is the apostolical method: St. Paul, arguing in the epistle to the Romans against justification by the law; aware of the false conclusions men of corrupt minds would be ready to draw from his reasonings; again and again purposely leaves his main subject, to assert and prove the goodness of the law notwithstanding.

With one accord, also, do all the writers of the sacred volume speak honourably of the *moral* law, expressing their approbation of it, and delight in it; nor is there one exception to this rule. This may shew us the great importance of this part of the subject: and how dangerous some inconsiderate expressions are, into which several good men have been betrayed, in their zeal for that *fundamental doctrine, justification by faith alone.*

We may be sure, that the law is holy, just, and good; because given by a holy, just, and good God, whose work is perfect: and because after Adam's fall, when it became *morally* impracticable for any of his posterity to be justified by it; he is still pleased to continue them under it, judge them according to it, and condemn them to utter destruction* for breaking it. "Is there unrighteousness with God?" He would not

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* All who die in unbelief perish for breaking this law: all who are saved, were thus condemned for breaking it; else why did Christ bear their sins for them? Some indeed talk of another and milder law; but where it is found, when promulgated, what it requires, who does keep it, or who is condemned for breaking it, hath never been, nor ever can be, determined. Others express themselves very ambiguously about our obligations to keep the law, prior to the consideration of redemption. But where there is no law, there can be no transgression; where there is no transgression, there can be no condemnation; and where no condemnation, no occasion for redemption. Thus we repeal the law, and subvert the gospel. Surely, we ought with precision to determine this matter: and to shew, that man as God's creature is bound to obey his law; that sin is the transgression of the law; that the wages of sin is death; that Christ died (not for Adam's sin only, or mainly, but) for our transgressions of the law: that they who perish,

do these things, if they were not perfectly just. If they appear unjust to us, it is owing to our ignorance, self-love, low thoughts of God, and favourable thoughts of sin. Nay, so far was God from repealing this law, or abating its strictness, after man's transgression, that he republished it from mount Sinai with awful majesty: he requires every one, who would escape condemnation at the day of judgment, to condemn himself now for his transgressions of it, and to seek forgiveness from his sovereign mercy: Nor would he even thus pardon one sinner except as his own Son honoured the law in our stead, by his perfect obedience and death upon the cross. Moreover he gives it into the hand of all believers as a rule of life, a standard of sin and holiness; yea, writes it in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. Thus doth the most high God proclaim to the whole world his determination "to mag-"nify the law, and make it honourable." And had we no other evidence of its excellency; this being abundantly sufficient ought fully to satisfy us; yea, to humble us in the dust for acting so unreasonably as to break it.

May we not, however, ourselves discern the reasonableness of it, notwithstanding our partiality in our own cause, and our love of sin? God is evidently the

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are condemned (not only or principally because Adam sinned, but) for their own sins; that upon believing in Christ we are delivered from the condemnation of sinners, but are never released from the obedience we owe as creatures; and that the obligation to obey is enforced on us by most powerful additional motives taken from redemption.

Perfection of glory and beauty,* the Pattern and Fountain of loveliness; from whom all that is lovely in all creatures is an emanation, of whom it is a faint resemblance, which hath comparatively "no glory by "reason of the glory that excelleth." In himself he is therefore worthy of all admiration, love, and worship. From him we derive our existence, and all that rendereth our existence comfortable: our obligations therefore to him, as our Creator and Benefactor, are immense; he deserves then our entire and unreserved gratitude. Infinite love and gratitude, though he is worthy of them, his law requires not, because we are not capable of them. Nor doth it enjoin the love and service of an angel; because he hath not endowed us with angelick capacities. The law runs thus: "Thou "shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and "mind, and soul, and strength:" its requirements are proportioned, not to his worthiness, but to our capacities. Of this love the man of the slenderest abilities is equally capable with the sublimest genius; the infant as the aged. In proportion to the superiority or inferiority of capacity, more or less is required: if it be honestly *our all*, the law demands no more.

But the law makes no allowance for our disinclination and indisposition to love and serve God with *our all;* because this is that very malignity of heart which renders us abominable in his sight. Every degree of this temper is a degree of enmity to God; the very disposition arises from pride, love of the world, and

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* Psalm l. 2. Out of Zion, the PERFECTION OF BEAUTY, GOD hath shined.

love of sin; and in proportion as it prevails, is contempt of God, in comparison with the world, sin, and self. It is therefore in itself infinitely unreasonable, totally inexcusable, and the very temper of the devil; who is completely detestable, because completely of this abominable disposition.* When we therefore

* This disposition is properly original sin, the effect of Adam's transgression. Therefore he, as the root, and we in him as the branches, lost God's favour and image, and became liable to and fit for destruction. That this disposition is propagated by natural generation cannot reasonably be denied: that it is properly the punishment of Adam's sin, seems capable of scriptural proof. If we cannot clearly perceive the justice of this, we must silence our objections thus: "Shall "not the Judge of all the earth do right?" True penitents read their own character, and see their own picture, in Adam's conduct, and are humbled for original sin, as the fountain of all their actual transgressions. But as it is always either disputed, neglected, or abused, until the heart be otherwise humbled, I did not think it proper particularly to insist upon it in this discourse.—Whilst some appear to lay an undue stress on Adam's transgression, and speak as if it were the only sin, for which we were condemned, or Christ died: others totally deny, and revile the doctrine of the fall; contending that man now is just such a creature, with respect to his moral character and dispositions, as God originally created him. But the apostle Paul more than intimates that the image of God consists in righteousness and true holiness. Now we know that God created man in his own IMAGE: he also made him upright, and pronounced him very good. The question therefore is, what man now is? If experience and observation prove him to be naturally and universally prone to evil, and averse from good; and if the scripture pronounce him evil, and abominable, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart to be only evil continually: he must be fallen from what

shew that the law is holy, just, and good, because exactly level to our capacities, we mean our *natural powers*, not our *moral dispositions:* the want of the former proportionably excuses, the want of the latter proportionably aggravates, every failure of any given degree of service. Man, not having the powers of an angel, is excusable in not performing the services of an angel: but being of an unholy disposition, he is therefore the more inexcusable in any particular act of unholiness; seeing it appears that it was no inadvertency, but the rooted disposition of his heart.

To love and serve God with our all is the substance of the requirements of the law in the first table. And what can be more reasonable? Can there be any difficulty in loving one so lovely, being thankful to such

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he was originally.—Ingratitude, enmity to God, pride, ambition, envy, malice, lust, falsehood, and covetousness, can form no part of the image of a holy God; or of that uprightness in which man was first made. But he must be very hardy, who should deny them to form a part of man's present character. Nor can we suppose the God of truth would first pronounce man very good, and afterwards, without any intervening change, so often declare him altogether abominable. How much more does it become our narrow capacities, and proneness to mistake, to rest satisfied with the scriptural accounts "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin," "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners;" and to adore the depths we cannot fathom: than in the pride of philosophy, and metaphysicks, with such scanty information, to decide upon what we cannot comprehend, and with daring temerity to utter such words, as more than seem to be injurious to the divine character.

a Friend, or serving such a Master, except what arises from the inexcusable badness of our hearts? For this we are condemned, for this we ought to condemn ourselves, "abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and "ashes."

To love all men with equal estimation and benevolence, is the substance of the second table: and we need only suppose this law given to our neighbours alone, as the rule of their conduct towards us, in order to perceive its excellency. What lovely happy creatures should we be, and what a delightful world would this prove, were all perfectly obedient! None is or can be miserable but the transgressor, or they whom transgressors injure. How excellent then this law, which provides for the happiness of the world so completely, that by transgression alone could men become in any degree miserable! Ought we not then to repent of our disobedience, our continual disobedience, and especially of our entire depravity of disposition, which renders us *morally* incapable of obedience?

Let every precept be impartially examined, and these things will appear with still more convincing evidence. For instance: "Remember the sabbath-"day, to keep it holy." Is it not highly reasonable that we should devote this portion of our time to him, to whom the whole belongs? Would not our best interests, in connexion with the glory of God, be promoted by obeying this commandment? "These "things he commands us for our good." How unreasonable then our disobedience! What need have we

to repent of forgetting and neglecting to hallow the sabbath!

Again, "whatsoever ye would that men should do "unto you, do ye even so unto them." As we all judge it reasonable that others should thus behave to us; let conscience determine, whether we have not done wrong in, and ought not to repent of, transgressing this rule in our conduct to others. We might easily examine other precepts, and shew them to be equally reasonable. Yea, every one of them is so; and therefore every deviation from perfect obedience is entirely unreasonable. There is nothing in the whole law of God grievous in itself; or difficult, except to our proud and carnal hearts.—David and Paul, men after God's own heart, greatly loved and delighted in God's law: Christ being perfectly holy, entirely delighted in it, and perfectly obeyed it: angels, and saints in glory enjoy full liberty in obeying it, and find it perfect felicity: yea, God himself, though absolute Sovereign, is pleased to observe in his own conduct, the same rules he prescribes for our's, (as far as consists with his majesty and authority;) his law is the transcript of his own holiness; and when he requires our obedience, he only says, "Be ye holy, for "I am holy." In proportion as we bear his image we take pleasure in his precepts, and find obedience easy and natural: in proportion as we resemble Satan, we hate the law, and find obedience irksome, arduous, impossible. How excellent then this law; how vile are we who have broken it! What need have we to repent of our unreasonable conduct!

III. All have need to repent, because all have by

sin absolutely destroyed themselves.—A trifling penalty incurred by transgression might reasonably have been disregarded. When human laws only inflict small fines, short imprisonment, or burning in the hand, offenders may treat such penalties with indifference: but when excruciating tortures, and ignominious death, are the threatened punishment; when the sentence is impartially and rigorously inflicted; when the crime is fully proved, and the prisoner closely confined; the most stubborn spirit bends, the stoutest heart is intimidated, and indifference is madness.—Art thou then, sinner, careless and unconcerned in a case infinitely more tremendous? Canst thou find a heart for gay amusements, or cooly apply to worldly pursuits, whilst the wrath of God abideth upon thee, the law thunders out a dreadful curse against thee, death closely pursues thee, everlasting misery awaits thee? That God whom thou hast offended, is at once the Witness, Judge, and Avenger of thy crimes: thou canst not hide thy transgressions from his all-seeing eye: thou canst not flee from his omnipresence, resist his almighty power, bribe his inflexible justice, or endure his awful vengeance. The sentence, if thou die impenitent, is already published in the Judge's own words: "Depart, "from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared "for the devil and his angels." Are not these words of the loving Saviour most dreadful? "Can thy hands "be strong or can thy heart endure," when they shall sound in thy affrighted ear? Is this "the wrath to "come," surely, inevitably to come, upon an ungodly world? Are they his words who saith, "Hea-

" ven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall " not pass away?" Art thou one of the very persons concerned? Art thou a transgressor of the law? Doth the word of God run thus, " Cursed is every one, " who continueth not in all things written in the book " of the law to do them?" And dost thou still remain unconcerned? Indeed, were there no way of escape, it would not be worth while to torment thyself before the time. "But there is forgiveness with God," there is a space allowed for repentance, a way of salvation, a proclamation of mercy: and dost thou still trifle, and not apply thyself immediately to seek deliverance from the wrath to come?

Surely these considerations, if laid to heart in a manner suitable to their certainty and importance, would damp the vain mirth of an ungodly world, and turn their songs and laughter into bitter lamentations. Let me, my fellow sinners recommend the apostle's advice to you: " Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; " let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your " joy to heaviness."* Thus shall your godly sorrow for sin, " work repentance unto salvation not to be re- " pented of."

IV. The necessity of repentance appears from the justice of this sentence, severe as it may seem. Sinners are ready to say, ' I only gratify my natural inclinations, and enjoy a little irregular pleasure for a few years; and can it consist with the justice and goodness of God to punish me with everlasting misery? Is there any proportion between the crime and the

* James iv. 9.

punishment?' But consider, poor deluded man, the infinite majesty, purity, and goodness of that God, against whom thy sins are committed: consider that "his is the kingdom, and the power, and the glo-"ry, for ever:" consider thy relations to him, as his creature, his property, his subject; and the reasonableness of his claim to thy love and obedience, resulting both from his own excellency and authority, and the benefits he hath conferred on thee: consider the reasonableness of his law, the pleasantness of his service, the happiness of his subjects, and the noble rewards of obedience: then estimate, if thou art able, what injustice, ingratitude, rebellion, contempt, enmity, and obstinacy, there is in sin, and what punishment is adequate to its deservings.

If a man injure his equal, it is evil; if he injure his superior it is worse. If a child curse, smite, or murder his parent, his conduct is baser than it would have been, had he thus treated a stranger or an equal. The wiser, better, and more indulgent the parent, the more atrocious is the crime of the unnatural, ungrateful child. Should a son murder an excellent parent, in the midst of a recent profusion of kindness, without any provocation or motive, except in order to the more unrestrained gratification of some vile passion, what punishment should we deem too severe for the parricide? Add, further, the relation of sovereign to that of parent; a rightful, wise, just, clement sovereign, the common father of his people. For a persecuted David to stretch out his hand against the Lord's anointed, though a cruel treacherous Saul, would have been highly criminal: how much more to murder a prince of consummate ex-

cellency, without the least provocation! for his favourite, on whom his bounty had been lavished, to be the assassin! But for his son, his indulged son, to break through all obligations, human and divine, and murder his father and prince at once, that he might more unrestrainedly indulge his lusts, would stamp the action with stupendous baseness! When Absalom designed to act this monstrous part against the man after God's own heart, even the ill-judged lenity of the too indulgent parent was not permitted to rescue the traitor from deserved punishment.—According to the plainest dictates of human reason, the malignity of the action must rise in proportion to the authority and excellency of the party offended, and the offender's relations and obligations to him. In human affairs, this method of computing the comparative criminality of offences, and proportioning punishments, is generally adopted amongst civilized nations. If we are allowed to compute in the same method *the evil of sin*, (and why should we not?) what heart can conceive, or tongue express, or numbers reach the evil of every offence committed against the majesty of God! By arguments and meditations of this kind, we may arrive at some feeble conception of the odiousness of transgressing the divine law: but he alone, who sees all things exactly as they are, is the competent Judge: and my design is not to demonstrate a matter before doubtful, but to illustrate the reasonableness of that which is certainly true. Whether we see and allow it, or not, sin is infinitely evil, and deserving of eternal punishment. Thus he hath determined, "whose judgment we know to "be according unto truth." All his loyal subjects on

earth join in praising him, " as righteous in all his ways " and holy in all his works." All the inhabitants of heaven thus praise him, even while " the smoke of the torments of the wicked ascendeth up for ever and ever." None but rebels think the sentence too severe. If we would not have our lot with *them* in another world, let us not rank ourselves among them in this, but let us say, with holy Job, " I have uttered things which I understood not: things too wonderful for me, which I knew not." " I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once " have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but " I will proceed no farther." Yea, truly, " every mouth " shall be stopped, and all the world shall appear guil- " ty before God;" nay, they " shall be speechless" when ordered to be cast " into outer darkness, where " is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth."—What cause then have all to repent, who have justly merited so dreadful a punishment!

V. All have cause of, and need for repentance; because God will most certainly inflict this punishment upon all the impenitent with unabating severity. " Ex- " cept ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Let no man deceive you with vain words: the impenitent sinner shall certainly spend eternity in the " lake that " burneth with fire and brimstone." An awakening truth, which Satan and his instruments have in all ages been opposing; but in none more zealously, ingenuously, and, alas! successfully, than in this: for that great deceiver knows that nothing so affectually increases the number of the damned, as the disbelief of eternal damnation. " Ye shall not surely die," was the first temp- " tation of this murderer of souls: and still his kingdom

is supported by the same insinuation. But if there be any meaning in words, if the idea of eternal misery can be conveyed in human language, and if the Bible be the word of God, then the wicked "shall go into EVERLAS-"TING PUNISHMENT." Though God be rich in mercy, though there be plenteous redemption in the blood of Christ; yet neither the mercy of God, nor the blood of Christ, avail for any but the penitent: to others, all the threatening of the law alone belong: nor have they any part or lot in the gospel; except the deeper condemnation of neglecting such great salvation, and abusing the mercy of God, and the redemption of Christ, into an encouragement to continue in sin. Such sinners "are a people who have no understanding, therefore "he that made them will have no mercy on them." "Oh consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear "you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."*

VI. The necessity of repentance is further evinced, by considering the reasonableness of this awful determination. There is a controversy betwixt God and sinners, and blame must rest somewhere. Either God is indeed chargeable with blame for enacting so strict a law, and annexing so dreadful a penalty on transgressors; or the sinner is as much to blame as this penalty implies, for breaking the law. To harbour one moment the supposition that any part of the blame belongs to God, is blasphemous; doubtless the whole fault belongs to the sinner. Yet every impenitent sinner in excusing himself, condemns God. "Wilt thou,"

* Psalm l. 22.

saith he to Job, "disannul my judgment? Wilt thou "condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?"* Why did the sinner break the law, if he did not think it too strict? Doth he *pretend* it was by surprise, or sudden temptation, through inadvertency, and not deliberate rebellion?† Then why doth he not repent? His impenitence for the past, and his present continuance in transgression, strongly imply a most injurious censure of the law, as inconsistent with his happiness: and his vindication of himself and his conduct, implies a censure on the justice of God in condemning sinners, equally injurious.

Now should God pardon a sinner who thus excuses himself, and tacitly condemns him, he would seem to allow the excuse, and plead guilty to the charge; so that the honour of God and the salvation of an impenitent sinner, are irreconcileable contradictions: but God, conscious of his own most perfect justice, and jealous of his own glory, would sooner leave all the world to perish for ever, than thus consent to his own dishonour.—Every hope, which any man entertains of pardon in impenitency, involves the absurd supposition, when carefully investigated, that God will dis-

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* Job xl. 8.

† This is often the case of the true believer, who delights in the law of God, and hates evil, yet is surprised into the commission of that which he abhors, and breaks the law he loves; but recovering from the surprise, he directly and deeply repents. But this excuse is merely a pretence in others, by which they cover a rooted enmity to the law, an habitual love of sin; and their impenitence discovers their hypocrisy.

honour himself, to humour and favour a proud obstinate rebel. Every such hope is pregnant with the presumption spoken of by Moses. "Lest there be among "you a root that beareth gall and wormwood; and it "come to pass, when he heareth the words of this "curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I "shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination "of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst. The "Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the "Lord, and his jealousy shall smoke against that man; "and all the curses that are written in this book shall "lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name "from under heaven."* Let us, beloved, attend carefully to such plain warnings of the word of God, that we may be armed against the temptations of Satan, and the rising presumption of our own hearts.

VII. The necessity of repentance is further manifested by reflecting, that no impenitent sinner can cordially approve of the salvation revealed in the word of God. Indeed, did the gospel require men confidently to believe that *their* sins are already pardoned, and that all the blessings of salvation are already their's though they are destitute of every gracious disposition, as some have incautiously advanced: no scheme could better suit the pride and carnality of an impenitent heart. This however is not the true gospel of Christ, but another gospel, which must be opposed, even though preached by an angel from heaven. All are bound to believe that God will forgive the vilest of sinners, who repent and believe in Christ: otherwise

* Deut. xxix. 18—20.

they make God a liar; for he hath attested it. When by scriptural evidence, (even by holy dispositions produced, and holy actions performed,) I am sure that *my* faith is living, and *my* repentance genuine, I may be humbly sure, that *my* sins are forgiven, and that I am a child of God, and an heir of glory; but not before. That I shall be welcome, if I come aright, I may be sure before I come: that I have come aright, and am accepted, I can only be assured, by the effects I am conscious of, and the fruits of righteousness produced.

The way in which forgiveness and salvation are actually conferred upon sinners, may be thus illustrated. A state-criminal, under sentence of death, is thus addressed by his prince: 'You deserve to suffer the rigour of your sentence; no excuse can be made for your rebellion, nor one alleviating circumstance found in your case: yet, by my own clemency, I am disposed to shew mercy, so that I may but do it honourably; and so as effectually to express my disapprobation of your crime for an example to others. I will therefore seat myself upon my royal throne, surrounded by my nobles, and multitudes of my subjects, as witnesses of your submission and my clemency. Do you then approach and prostrate yourself in my presence, publickly and humbly confess your guilt, acknowledge you justly merit to be immediately led to execution, then throw yourself upon my royal mercy, and crave your life at my hands. In this humbling method, and in no other, will I forgive your crimes, and become your friend.'—I speak not here of that redemption-price which Immanuel paid, that "God

" might be just and the justifier of him who believ-
" eth:" but merely of the glory of God's justice in our condemnation, and of his mercy in our salvation; which he requires to be unreservedly and cordially acknowledged by every one, who comes to him for pardon.

But an impenitent sinner always rejects, and generally is affronted with, this preliminary of peace and reconciliation. He stands upon his vindication, and holds fast his pleas and excuses. If he allow that he hath his faults, he insists that he hath his virtues, and expects that they should be accepted by way of compensation. He hopes also to do something more by way of atoning for his faults; and thinks it would be hard, and indeed palpably unjust, to send him, with all his imagined good qualities, sincere obedience, and good intentions, to keep company with thieves, murderers, and prostitutes in the bottomless pit. Such indeed is the self-love, and self-partiality of mankind, that you shall find few, if any, even of the vilest characters, who have not something of this kind to plead in arrest of judgment: every man's own faults seem to himself more venial than those of other men, and his supposed good qualities and actions more estimable; and thus the sinner " flatters himself in his own " eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful." But especially, this is the grand objection of the rich, the moral, and the pharisaical. These would bid high and do much, yea almost any thing but this, which is so intolerably mortifying to their self-preference. On this ground principally numbers reject the gospel, part from Christ, and come short of salvation: as

" there is no difference; for all have sinned," all are condemned, none can make satisfaction; all then that are saved must condemn themselves, and submit to be saved by grace alone through faith in the Son of God. But whilst such persons proudly hesitate and object, the publicans and harlots, being brought to true repentance, approve of this humbling method, and enter into the kingdom of heaven before them.

VIII. Without repentance there can be no preparation of heart for that " holiness, without which no " man can see the Lord." All true christians are zealous of good works, being taught by " the grace " of God, which bringeth salvation, to deny ungodli- " ness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteous- " ly, and godly, in this present world." The christian indeed is very far from perfection in good works, and therefore he cannot be justified by them; neither does he at all depend on them: but by his sincere obedience, his unreserved attention to Christ's commands, he proves that he is a true believer and no hypocrite, he glorifies God, adorns the gospel, and promotes the real good of mankind.

But by deep repentance alone is the heart prepared for such a holy conduct. Without this there can be no " ceasing to do evil, or learning to do well;" no " hating the evil, and loving the good;" no " ab- " horring the evil, or cleaving to that which is good." Without repentance we cannot really love God, desire his glory, reverence his majesty, or delight in his law and service. Mere moral and relative good behaviour in the world, without any due regard to God; or mere external performances in religion, may subsist without repentance: but that holiness, which respects

the authority of God, as Law-giver and Judge, which springs from love of him and his commandments, and is intentionally directed to his glory, can only be produced from a heart renewed unto repentance.

Especially that deep sense of personal unworthiness, which is peculiar to the true penitent, prepares the heart to exercise genuine gratitude, contentment, patience, meekness, forgiveness of injuries, and love of enemies. These dispositions and duties form a very conspicuous part of the christian character, as delineated in the sacred scriptures: but no impenitent man can really exercise these graces, or perform these duties, whatever appearances he may occasionally assume. Yet if this be not our character and conduct, our hope is mere presumption, and our profession hypocrisy: "for if ye forgive not men their trespasses, "neither will your heavenly Father forgive your tres- "passes." So that without repentance no man can serve God here, or be saved in the world to come.

Lastly. Without repentance, there can be no meetness for heaven. Without a correspondent disposition, without an appetite prepared for the object, there can be no gratification. A holy heart relishes and delights in holiness, and is thus prepared for the enjoyment of a holy heaven. But he, who despises and disrelishes holiness in this world, could find no happiness in that place, where all the joys are holy, and where consequently all the employments would be irksome to him. No impenitent sinner has this "meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light:" because he cannot relish and delight in holiness: for as soon as he becomes of this disposition, he must

in proportion abhor unholiness, and abhor himself for his sinfulness; that is to say, he must repent of his sins.

The whole company of the redeemed are likewise represented, as joining in cordial and unreserved praises unto God and the Lamb: giving all the glory of their salvation to the rich mercy of the Father, and the precious blood of the Saviour. These praises imply an acknowledgment of the justice of the sentence executed upon the ungodly: nay, they imply that *they* themselves might justly, and should certainly, have perished with their fellow rebels, had not Jesus interposed with his atoning blood. But could any impenitent sinner join this worship with sincere delight? Many openly arraign the conduct of the Judge in dooming sinners to eternal misery: and every impenitent heart is disposed to quarrel with this part of the divine conduct. Nor would the case be different, were it possible for a person of this description to enter into heaven: he would secretly condemn his Maker for severity, in eternally punishing others for the very crimes he himself had committed, and never repented of: he must dissent from those praises in his heart, which arise from a principle he allows not; namely, that distinguishing grace and atoning blood have made all the difference, betwixt him and those in hell: he could not in sincerity allow, that God would have been glorious, though he had left him to perish. But there is neither hypocrisy nor discordant voice, nor unholiness, in those happy mansions: therefore no impenitent sinner shall ever enter into them.

Because our self-love renders us so unwilling to believe this important truth; because Satan with such artifice endeavours to draw off our attention from it; because we are so reluctant of ourselves duly to consider it; and because the entangling pursuits and interests, the pleasures, maxims, and examples of the world, have such a tendency to lull us into a fatal security in this respect; I have the more importunately laboured these multiplied demonstrations of the necessity of repentance. Surely, sinner, I have gained my point, fixed thy attention, and fully convinced thee, that thou hast cause to repent, oughtest to repent, and must either repent or perish. Surely, thy heart is by this time in some measure suitably affected, with the important subject; and thou art even now, with pressing anxiety, enquiring "what then is repentance?" Beseeching the Lord to assist and bless the attempt, I shall endeavour, with all possible seriousness and plainness, to satisfy this enquiry.

PART II.

THE NATURE OF REPENTANCE.

I SHALL not spend my time in critically enquiring into the etymology, or the meaning of the words, which we translate repentance in our version of the Bible. Suffice it to observe that μεταμελεομαι, one word frequently used, signifies to *be afterwards careful or uneasy; and* μετανοια that more commonly used, signifies a *change of mind*, of judgment and disposition; which ideas severally and conjunctly express the nature of repentance, as it may more fully be learned from the general tenour of the scriptures. I would then define true repentance to be 'A genuine sorrow for sin, attended with a real inclination to undo, if it were possible, all we have sinfully done; and consequently an endeavour, as far as we have it in our power, to counteract the consequences of our former evil conduct; with a determination of mind, through divine grace, to walk for the future in newness of life, evidenced to be sincere by fruits meet for repentance; that is, by all holy dispositions, words, and actions.' Enlarging on this definition I shall have an opportunity of expressing my sentiments on the nature of

real repentance, and distinguishing it from various counterfeits.

I. Repentance comprehends 'a *genuine* sorrow for 'sin.' This implies that there is a *spurious* sorrow on account of sin, which a man may have to excess without real repentance. This kind of sorrow arises from self-love, alarmed with the fear of punishment, without regard to the just desert of it. A man is indeed grieved; yet not that he hath sinned, but that God exceedingly hates sin, is determined to punish it, and is able to execute this determination in spite of all opposition. He is extremely sorry that the law is so very strict, and greatly terrified when he reflects on the danger to which he stands exposed: but he is not grieved at heart for the odious ungrateful part he hath acted.—In human affairs, many under condemnation of death appear thus penitent, whose insincerity is detected by a pardon, and they rush upon the commission of new crimes. Many penitents of this description we meet with on sick beds, or in circumstances of imminent danger: they are under excessive terrors, shed abundance of tears, and make many fair promises; but when the alarm is over, their repentance is repented of, and their concern lost in company and worldly pursuits. They likewise abound among the hearers of the gospel. Like Felix, when the word of God is brought home to their consciences, they tremble and perhaps weep: but they are soon quieted; and return to the pursuit of their worldly interests and pleasures with unabated alacrity: many of these embrace false and loose schemes of religion, are buoyed up with presumptuous hopes, and *practically* say, "let

"us sin on, that grace may abound." Having got over their alarm, their repentance is finished; they live without remorse for the past, or tenderness of conscience for the present; nor have they any trouble in general about their sins; except perchance some outrage to common decency shame them before their fellow sinners.

These transient alarms and convictions are most effectually made use of by Satan, to keep men from true repentance. A general persuasion prevails, that we ought to repent, though few understand the real nature of repentance. However, this general persuasion frequently excites from time to time, considerable uneasiness of conscience, to him who considers himself impenitent. But when men falsely imagine they have repented, or do repent, this uneasiness ceases, and they continue impenitent with a quiet mind.

Let me here intreat the reader to pause, and put a few questions on the subject to himself. 'Has it not 'been thus with me? Is it not so to this hour? Do I 'not keep my conscience from reproaching me, or si-'lence its friendly admonitions, by some general ap-'prehension, that I am at times a penitent?'—I beseech thee leave not this consideration till thou hast carefully examined it, as in the sight of God, and with the day of judgment before thine eyes. Most certain it is, that multitudes live all their lives in a continual course of sinning and repenting *in this way;* and at length die impenitent.

But a man may be *really* sorry for particular sins, without being a true penitent. Conscience sometimes

so reproaches men for certain enormous violation of all laws, human and divine, as to render them a terror to themselves: yea, they are exceedingly sorry that they ever committed those particular crimes, and would gladly undo them were it possible: and yet, this hath nothing in it of the nature of true repentance. Thus Judas repented of betraying Christ, confessing his guilt, making restitution, and even seeking to prevent the consequences of his base treachery: yea, he was so stung with remorse, that he could not live under the anguish, but became his own executioner. Yet he was not a true penitent; for the Lord assures us, "It had been good for that man had he never been "born:" and we do not find that he ever expressed the least remorse for his hypocrisy, his covetousness, or his other wickedness of heart and life, in which he had continued all his days. The case is often the same with murderers, who are unspeakably troubled for one act of violence to a fellow creature; but not in the least concerned for all the contempt, ingratitude, and enmity, of which they have been guilty towards God. And the same is observable in respect of many other notorious offenders.—This sorrow is not excited by a conviction, (resulting from knowledge and reflection,) of deep criminality in having sinned heinously by disobeying a good God, and breaking a good law; but it arises from the horror of having done violence to natural light and their own consciences, to that degree, that none of their former *excuses and pretences* can pacify them: God having preserved thus much of himself, and of his law, in our reason and conscience,

as a check upon natural depravity, and to bridle the headstrong corruptions of those, who neither fear him, nor regard men; yet cannot act out all their evil purposes without becoming their own tormentors.

But the sorrow of a true penitent is *for sin;* as committed against God, being rebellion against his rightful authority, and transgression of his holy law. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done "this evil in thy sight."* He mourns after a godly sort, with a godly sorrow, or a sorrow which directly regards God.† His sorrow springs from the consideration of the majesty, purity, and excellency of that glorious Being whom he hath offended; the reasonableness of the law which he hath transgressed, the obligations to obedience which he hath violated, the injustice and ingratitude of which he hath been guilty, and the complicated odiousness of his conduct. As every sin partakes of the same nature, and implies the same disregard to God, he mourns for all, and every one; whether man were injured by it or not; whether it were secret or open; a sin of omission, or of commission; and whether it were or were not contrary to the notions, maxims, customs, and allowance of the world. Yea, every sinful temper, imagination, and inclination; every idle unprofitable word; every evil action of his whole life, as upon examination it recurs to his remembrance, excites afresh his godly sorrow. In proportion as he recollects the numberless instances of God's unwearied patience and kindness to

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* Psalm li. 4. † 2 Cor. vii. 9, 10.

him in former years, he becomes more sensible of his own ingratitude, forgetfulness, and disobedience: and the further he is enlightened to see the glory of God, the more hateful all sin appears, and the more he mourns over his own offences.

As therefore the glory of the divine character shines forth more illustriously from the person and sufferings of Jesus, than from all the other works of God; the true penitent's sorrow will be more or less intense, in proportion to the degree of his spiritual apprehensions and realizing views of that great event. When with fixed attention he can meditate on the divine Surety for sinners, agonizing in the garden and expiring on the cross; when he can realize to his mind, in the exercise of faith, who He was that suffered; and what he endured from the cruelty and insult of men, the power and malice of Satan, and the avenging justice of the Father; and wherefore he suffered, that he might bear our sins, and expiate our guilt: then in an especial manner his mind is deeply impressed with admiring views of the awful holiness and justice, and the unfathomable love and compassion of God; then sin appears to his mind peculiarly odious, as committed against a God of such a lovely and loving character; then he becomes abominable in his own eyes, and mourns for his sins with peculiar humiliation. They now become a sore burden, too heavy for him to bear; he goes mourning for them all the day long, yet mourns that he can mourn no more, is ashamed that he is no more affected, and abhors himself for the remaining hardness of his heart.

He now no longer vindicates his conduct, or extenuates his crimes: his mouth is stopped, his guilt is manifest, and he condemns himself. His judgment of his own character is now totally changed: he used to admire and approve, now he abhors and loathes himself; he was disposed to exalt himself, now he becomes more and more disposed to self-abasement. Then turning his thoughts inward, he traces back the streams of sin, which have polluted his life, to that fountain of iniquity in his heart from whence they sprang. "Be- "hold," says he, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in "sin did my mother conceive me."*—Abased in himself, and impressed with an awful sense of the holy majesty of God, he would despond, yea, at length absolutely despair, were he not supported by discoveries of the rich mercy of God, and the precious salvation of the gospel. Yet thus encouraged, he indeed ventures to speak unto the Lord, but it is in the publican's self-abased frame of spirit, and humble words, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

This deep humiliation of soul renders a man backward to conclude his repentance genuine, his faith sincere, and his sins forgiven. These blessings appear in his eyes so large, his own character so vile, and his humiliation so small, in comparison with what he is conscious it ought to be, that he can hardly raise his hopes so high: and he is so aware of the wickedness of his heart, and discovers so much of Satan's artifice, that he fears being imposed on by a false peace, where

* Psalm li. 5.

eternity is at stake. But when this hope springs up in his heart, and he discovers, by comparing it with the Scripture, with fervent prayer, that "it is the hope "that maketh not ashamed, because the love of God "is shed abroad in his heart by the holy Ghost given "unto him;" this is so far from drying up his tears, and terminating his repentance, that it vastly enlarges and purifies his godly sorrow; which is now attended with a sweetness far exceeding all earthly joy. The fuller assurance he possesses that Jesus "was wound-"ed for *his* transgressions, and was bruised for *his* ini-"quities," the more he abhors his sins and loathes himself. Here he sees, with personal application, what wrath sin merited! What punishment he was worthy of! When a God of such immense compassion would not pardon one sin, without such a satisfaction: yea, would rather not spare his own Son, but be pleased to bruise him in whom his soul delighted, than either leave sin unpunished, or sinful men to perish!

His own concern in this transaction directs his attention peculiarly to it. "The Father loved *him*, and "gave his beloved Son to die for *him:* Christ loved *him*, "and gave himself for him, and interceded for him:" and thus *he* was spared and born with, all the years of his rebellion, whilst many others were cut off in their sins. At length "God, who is rich in mercy, for his "great love, wherewith he loved him, even when dead "in sins, quickened him" by his Spirit: thus born of God, he was pardoned, justified, and adopted into God's family, and numbered amongst the heirs of eternal glory; to which he is sealed by the graces and consolations of the Holy Spirit: as these are the earn-

est of the promised inheritance. Such discoveries and prospects elevate the soul to a degree of adoring love and gratitude, before unknown; and this increases the penitent's self-abasement and godly sorrow. His heart is even broken, and as it were melted, when he considers the number and odiousness of the crimes committed against the glorious and gracious God, who was all the while full of love to him. His character is stamped, "a mourner that shall be comforted:" yet is his a sweet sorrow: whilst with tears of contrition and gratitude, he praises a pardoning God and a bleeding Saviour, he realizes the paradox, "Sorrowful, yet "always rejoicing:" except that in some dark seasons his heart is insensible, both to the motions of godly sorrow, and of holy joy. These alternate variations in the frame of his spirit the true christian experiences through the remainder of his life. His more melting seasons of godly sorrow are blended with, and prepare the way for, his sweetest consolations; which again increase and purify his mourning for sin; as he then most clearly perceives what a gracious and glorious God he hath offended, and how vile he hath been. Thus ingenuous sorrow and holy joy reciprocally assist one another; they intermingle with, and are proportioned to, each other in his daily experience; till at length death closes the varied scene. Then God wipes away all tears from his eyes; the days of his mourning are ended, he shall eternally be comforted, and plenteously reap that harvest which here he sowed in tears.

—I do not mean to determine any thing concerning the degree in which true penitents obtain these spiritual discoveries, or experience these flowing affections

and melting frames. 'Tis enough if we can describe the distinguishing nature of true repentance. True grace is of the same nature and tendency, whether we have much or little of it.

If then the genuine sorrow for sin required in Scripture has been described, it is no objection to say, that many true Christians have very little of these views and affections; because that is only to say, in other words, that they have but little true repentance; or (which amounts to the same thing,) have but little true grace. And the less they have of these things, the less evident is their conversion; the more need have "they to examine themselves, whether they be in the "faith;" and to "give diligence to make their call-"ing and election sure." Certainly we must not adulterate the word of God, that we may accommodate it to the experience of lukewarm professors in a day when "iniquity abounds, and the love of many wax-"es cold." This would be the way to reduce things from bad to worse, till true religion vanish from among us. We must still keep to the standard of God's word, the experience of scriptural saints, and the specimen of primitive Christians, endeavouring to stir up men's minds to imitate these illustrious examples. And on careful examination, I trust, the above description of godly sorrow will be found scriptural: all real Christians have experienced something of it, and habitually do experience it: and the more distinct their views, the more enlarged their affections, and the deeper their contrition; the more evidently they are true penitents, and entitled to all the consolations belonging to that character.

Nor is the order, in which these things are experienced, at all material, provided the godly sorrow be of the proper nature and tendency: yet I would just observe, that at all times it is begun before *assured* hope of salvation; otherwise pardon and the *assurance of it* would be vouchsafed to impenitent sinners; but it is much enlarged by this assurance, wherever it is scripturally possessed; as the believer now "looks "upon him whom he hath pierced, and mourns." It begins previously to the sense of pardoning love, and is perfected by it; because the believer's love to the Lord is thus increased, and this increases sorrow for having offended him. Let this be well digested, and then let us proceed to observe that,

II. Repentance is 'attended with a real inclination 'to undo, if it were possible, all that we have sinfully 'done; and consequently with an endeavour, as far as 'we have it in our power, to counteract the consequences of our former evil conduct.'—This frame of spirit will manifest itself,

1. By ingenuous confession of our sins to the glory of that God, whom by sin we have dishonoured. Thus Joshua exhorts Achan; "My son, give glory "to the LORD, and make confession unto him." The commission of sin impeaches the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God; and seems to say, that he hath forbidden us something conducive to our real happiness. Obstinacy in sin defies his power, dares his vengeance, and despises his truth and holiness: to vindicate ourselves, and cover our sins, arraigns the righteousness of his threatnings and judgments, or affronts his omniscience: thus the sinner robs God of

his glory. What he hath done cannot be undone: nor is it in his power to make satisfaction for the injustice of which he hath been guilty, except he bear the eternal punishment. Convinced of this, the the true penitent flees for refuge to the atoning blood of Jesus. But though he cannot make satisfaction for his sins, or do any thing towards meriting pardon, or reward, (for this he knows must be wholly of free mercy:) yet what he can do, he will. He will, both in secret, and openly, on all proper occasions, make full and unreserved confession of his crimes, and condemn himself; and thus glorify God's justice and mercy, glorify his law as the ministration of condemnation, and his gospel as the ministration of righteousness: for "both are glorious, though the latter exceed in "glory."* All, who have even a superficial acquaintance with the Bible, know that this is every where spoken of as an essential part of true repentance, and often put for the whole of it; I shall not therefore further dwell upon it, but shall confine myself to two observations. First, that secret sins require only secret confession unto that God, who knoweth and seeth in secret: but publick scandals require publick acknowledgments; that we may openly honour God by our confession, as we have dishonoured him openly by our conduct. Thus when David had by adultery and murder given cause to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; by writing and publishing the fifty-first psalm, he publickly took shame to himself, even before his own servants, subjects, and children; and thus

* 2 Cor. iii. 7—11.

gave glory unto God, and stopped the blasphemy of the ungodly. Secondly, that the true penitent, though general in his publick confessions, should be, and will be, very particular in his secret confessions; reviewing, enumerating, and bemoaning all his sins, of every sort, with all their various aggravations.

2. This disposition of mind will influence the penitent to make ample restitution to those whom he hath defrauded or injured. Under the ceremonial law, the trespass-offering was to be accompanied by restitution to the injured party.* The plain meaning of which institution Christ hath given us in his sermon on the mount. "If thou bring thy gift unto the altar, and "there rememberest that thy brother hath ought "against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, "and go thy way; *first* be reconciled to thy brother, "and then come and offer thy gift." Thus it was that Zaccheus evidenced the sincerity of his repentance: and thus every sincere convert, with self-indignation, will haste to be rid of that accursed thing, dishonest gain:† with scrupulousness and diligence he will search for every remainder of it: he will restore it with interest to the injured, if he can; if not he will give it to their relatives, and to the poor: and should he be unable to do this, (which he will put himself to much inconvenience and self-denial rather than not effect;) it will be long the occasion of additional trouble of mind to him.—Let me ask thee, beloved rea-

* Lev. vi. 1—7.

† Who shaketh his hands from holding of bribes. Is. xxxiii. 15.

der, if thou thinkest thyself a penitent, whether thou hast well considered this part of repentance? whether thou hast impartially examined thyself on this score? whether thou hast imitated Zaccheus in this matter? Or art thou sure thou hast no cause, having never injured any man by fraud, violence, or extortion? I warn thee beforehand, that God will bring to light these hidden things of darkness, and fully investigate this matter at the day of judgment. And no* *unrighteous* persons, who, having injured their neighbours, love the gains of iniquity so well as to refuse restitution, shall inherit the kingdom of God.—This evidence of sincerity is so distinguishing, that I cannot but conclude, judging by the Bible, that all appearances of repentance, all pretences to experience, without this, are hypocritical and delusory. What shall we say then to many persons, who having formerly, under colour of law, been, *perhaps* unwillingly, injurious to their creditors, still keep them out of their just rights; nay see them struggling with those difficulties, into which their extravagance hath plunged them; whilst they themselves now live at ease, or in affluence: and are well able, (if they could prevail with themselves to retrench superfluous expences,) to make restitution in whole, or in part; but will not, because not compelled by the law of the land? These persons evidently confound human laws with doing the will of God; and prefer wealth, indulgence, and the pride of life, to the golden rule, of "doing unto "others, as they would they should do unto them."

* 1 Cor. vi. 9.

Whatever profession of religion any one may make, his religion is vain, and a discourse upon repentance would be exceedingly defective, which did not bear testimony against this common and flagrant conduct.

Another evil, I am told, very common among persons professing evangelical religion, as well as others, is dealing in smuggled or contraband goods. This trade is in itself,—an evident violation of God's express command;*—a robbery upon the community, which must be taxed to make up the deficiency;—and aiding and abetting all the enormities that smugglers commit.—But necessity is pretended. I suppose it is necessary in order to be rich. "But they, "that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, "and into divers foolish and hurtful lusts, which "drown men in destruction and perdition: For the "love of money is the root of all evil."†

But our evil conduct may injure others, not only in their property, but in their reputation, in their connexions, in their peace of mind, and in many other ways: and the true penitent, though he cannot undo what is past; yet will endeavour to counteract the mischief, at the expence of stooping to the most humiliating submissions, of making the frankest acknowledgments, or by any method in his power, however contrary to the pride and self-love of the human heart.

3. This disposition of mind will induce a man to retract those false principles, which he has advanced, that may have a tendency to propagate or countenance

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* Rom. xiii. 6, 7. † 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.

infidelity or profaneness: and to counteract the consequence of his evil conduct, where it hath prejudiced men's minds against religion, or induced and emboldened them in sin; or any ways tended to the dishonour of God, and the ruin of souls. Gladly would he undo this part of his conduct: it ever grieves him upon reflection: he is pained that the seed is sown, and springs up and grows, notwithstanding all his endeavours to the contrary. But as far as his retraction, his arguments, his persuasions, his example, and influence can reach, he will endeavour to prevent the further progress of the mischief.—In these and various other particulars, true repentance influences a man sincerely to desire and endeavour to counteract the tendency of his former evil conduct: but appearances of humiliation for sin may be, and often are, without this distinguishing effect. Thus Ahab humbled himself and was clothed in sackcloth, but neither restored Naboth's vineyard, nor ceased to commit iniquity.

III. True repentance is attended with a determination of mind, through divine grace, to walk for the future in newness of life, evidenced to be sincere by fruits meet for repentance, that is, by all holy dispositions, words, and actions.

This is at last the grand distinction betwixt true repentance, and all false appearances. Though men be abundant in shedding tears, and make the most humiliating confessions, or most ample restitution; though they openly retract their false principles, and are zealous in promoting true religion; though they relate the most plausible story of experiences, and profess to be favoured with the most glorious manifestations; though

they have strong confidence, high affections, orthodox sentiments, exact judgment, and extensive knowledge: yet, except they do works meet for repentance, all the rest is nothing, they are still in their sins. For the tree is known by the fruit; and "every tree that bringeth "not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the "fire." Yea, though Cain's terror, Judas's confession and restitution, Pharaoh's fair promises, Ahab's humiliation, Herod's reverencing the prophet, hearing him gladly, and doing many things; the stony ground hearer's joy; together with the tongue of men and angels, the gifts of miracles and prophecies, and the knowledge of all mysteries, were combined in one man; they would not prove him a true penitent, so long as the love of one lust remained unmortified in his heart, or the practice of it is *allowed* in his life.

Unless the drunkard become habitually sober, and the churl learn to be liberal; unless the contentious man learn meekness, and the proud humility; unless every man break off, and set himself to oppose and mortify his constitutional and customary iniquity; there is no real repentance. The man's mind is not changed respecting sin: he does not sincerely grieve that ever he committed it, nor really desire it undone, nor heartily abhor it, nor is willing to be finally divorced from it; not from his darling indulgence, his Delilah, his Herodias; however he be affected, alarmed, and restrained.

I allow, that the true penitent will find work enough all his life with his own peculiar evil propensities; and after all his watchfulness, prayer, and determination of mind against every sin, will too often manifest, to his

great sorrow, that his evil nature is not destroyed, and that sin yet dwells within him: but he will also give abundant evidence that no sin hath dominion over him; that his own iniquity is peculiarly abhorred, dreaded, and opposed; and that, in short, "he is a new creature, "old things are past away, behold all things are be- "come new." This will not be so evident to others, in the case of a man, who was before moral and decent in his character: but it will be equally manifest to his own conscience; whilst he observes that he now acts from other principles, to other ends, and by another rule than heretofore; and now has not only regard to those things, with which men are acquainted; but with equal care and attention abstains from secret sins, from evil tempers, intentions, and imaginations, which are manifest only unto God.

It appears then, beloved, that this necessary repentance is a very arduous business. Thus our Lord represents it: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for "many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Do you object the profit and pleasantness of your sins, and the pain of renouncing them? He answers, "If "thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out; if thy right "hand or foot offend thee, cut it off, for it is profita- "ble for thee" thus maimed and mutilated, "to enter "into life, rather than having two eyes, two hands, two "feet, to be cast into hell, where *their* worm never "dieth, and the fire is not quenched." When the difficulty is objected, the necessity is urged, the awful alternative, repentance, or eternal damnation. But should any urge the impossibility; he proposes the effectual assistance of Him, to whom all things are possible.

An easy slothful religion may serve a man to live with: but a diligent, self-denying religion alone will comfortably prepare a man to meet death. "Except a man "deny himself, take up his cross daily, and forsake "all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple," saith the loving Saviour of the world, the Judge of the living and the dead: and because we are so backward to believe it, and so much depends upon believing it, he confirms it with a double asseveration—"Verily, ve-"rily, I say unto you."

But though the work be great, and require labour and self-denial, there is no cause for despondency; the encouragements are proportionable: the success certain to every one who is in good earnest about it; and the work itself unspeakably more pleasant than all the forbidden delights of sin.

PART III.

ENCOURAGEMENTS TO REPENTANCE.

I HAVE already intimated, that he, who convinced of the necessity of repentance, in good earnest uses those means which God hath appointed in order to it, may depend upon the effectual assistance of the holy Spirit in this important undertaking, which will render it both practicable and pleasant: and the same topick will afterwards be resumed, when those means are treated of. I shall not therefore farther speak upon that subject in this place, but lead your attention to those encouragements, which arise from the assurance that repentance is inseparably connected with salvation.

I. In the first place, "God commandeth all men "every where to repent." Were there any of the human race who did not need repentance, or any to whom repentance would be unavailing, we may be sure God would not have given such a commandment. He sends no message of this kind to fallen angels, or the souls of wicked men who have died in their sins; because he hath determined to shew them no mercy. Having done wrong in sinning, doubtless they conti-

nue to do wrong in not repenting: and their impenitent rebellion and enmity to God will eternally illustrate his justice in their condemnation; as all will see, that he doth not without cause treat them as enemies. A man who hath murdered his lawful prince, though the law must have its course, ought to repent, and shews a still more desperate spirit of rebellion if he die vindicating his conduct. Yet the avenger of blood, designing no mercy, requires no submission. A command to submit and repent, if sent to a company of condemned criminals, would directly excite a beam of hope in every relenting breast.—God sends his ministers and word, commanding thee, O sinner, to repent: were no more said, thou mightest safely draw this conclusion;—'Certainly he hath thoughts of peace, 'and intends to shew mercy to all who obey the sum-'mons.'

II. God is always in scripture represented as peculiarly ready to receive and entertain repenting sinners. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning him-"self thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chas-"tised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn "me and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my "God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented: "and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my "thigh. I was ashamed, yea even confounded, because "I did bear the reproach of my youth.—Is Ephraim "my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? for since I "spake against him, I do earnestly remember him "still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him, I "will surely have mercy upon him saith the LORD."*

* Jer. xxxi. 18—20.

Here is the true penitent, mourning for sin, covered with shame, and crying for mercy; and the encouraging answer of that God, "who waited to be gracious." The same is most emphatically inculcated by the experience of David in the thirty-second Psalm. There mark carefully, how soon the sweet sense of forgiving love followed his ingenuous confession of guilt.

But omitting many other scriptures for the sake of brevity, let me detain you a little in meditating on the prodigal son; a parable spoken on purpose to encourage the publicans and sinners, who listened to the words of Jesus. Let us attentively consider the character of the prodigal, his disdainful and ungrateful behaviour to a wise and indulgent father, his debauched and dissolute life, and the misery to which he was reduced. Here, as in a glass, we may see ourselves; our pride and ingratitude, our contempt of God and wilful departure from him, our folly, and our misery whilst we live in sin. Then let us view him at length *come to himself*, conscious of his guilt, sinking under his misery, covered with shame, adopting the resolution of returning to his offended father, with penitent confessions and humble supplications. Discouraged as well as humbled, by the recollection of his own vileness, his only hope arises from meditating on the kindness of him whom he had so basely offended; and he can just enough raise his mind above despondency to expect, that, perhaps, after many repulses, and reiterated submissions and intreaties, answered by deserved upbraidings, his father might be at length prevailed on to admit him, in some mean capacity, to share that plenty which his servants enjoyed. Here we

have the frame of spirit, the hopes, and the fears, of the true penitent, most affectingly delineated.—But behold the tender father is looking out with eager expectation for the return of his lost prodigal: he sees him afar off, and, through paternal tenderness and compassion, is regardless of his age and gravity, and runs to meet him. Finding that he abhorred and condemned himself, without one reproach or the least delay, he welcomes him as a son; clothes, feasts, and rejoices over him, and commands all his servants to rejoice with him: "Because," says he, "this my son was dead, and "is alive! was lost, and is found!"

Thus shall every true penitent be welcomed by a gracious God. Not only shall he meet with a kinder reception than his fears foreboded; but his most sanguine expectations shall be far exceeded; his sins, however numerous, shall not be mentioned against him; his wants shall be all supplied; pardon, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, shall be conferred on him; the robe of righteousness and salvation shall clothe him; angels in heaven shall rejoice more over him, than over ninety and nine Pharisees, who in their own judgment need no repentance; yea, God himself shall acknowledge him as his own child, and rejoice over him to do him good. Arise then, poor rejected sinner, and imitate this prodigal.

III. We have seen that repentance and forgiveness are connected, in a great many texts of scripture, which have been cited, and many others might be produced. But I would more especially call your attention to those encouraging promises, which are expressly confined to such as are exercising repentance. It would

be a needless prolixity to enumerate the whole, or the most, of these promises: a few examples may suffice. "Thus, saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth "eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high "and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite "and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, "and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." —"To this man will I look, even to him that "is poor and of a contrite heart, and that trembleth at "my word."*—"He looketh upon men, and if any "say I have sinned, I have perverted that which is "*right*, and it profiteth me not: he shall deliver his "soul from going down into the pit, and his life shall "see the light."†—"He that covereth his sins shall "not prosper; but he that confesseth, and forsaketh "his sins, shall find mercy."‡—"If we say that we "have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not "in us; but if we confess our sins, God is faithful and "just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from "all unrighteousness."§ Let but the broken-hearted sinner well consider these few citations, and plead them in prayer, through the intercession of Jesus, and he will find them full of consolation. Then let him search the scriptures, and he will observe that no one character is so particularly encouraged as that of the penitent; under the titles of mourners, poor in spirit, contrite, humble, and such others, as are included in the explanation that has been given of true repentance. These things abundantly prove, that none but true penitents share

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* Is. lvii. 15. lxvi. 2. † Job xxxiii. 27, 28. ‡ Prov. xxviii. 13. § 1 John i. 9.

the blessings, or are entitled to the consolations, which flow from the salvation, of the gospel: and that no degree of aggravated guilt can exclude any such repenting sinner from the participation of the one, and the enjoyment of the other.

But let not any from hence conclude, that these privileges are properly the rewards of repentance, or that it atones for our crimes. This would supersede the necessity of the expiatory sufferings of Jesus, and militate with St. Paul's express declaration, "that we are "justified by *faith*, through the righteousness of "Christ," and consequently would infer, "that "Christ died in vain." Did we repent of ourselves, without the preventing and assisting grace of God; and were our repentance perfect in its nature and fruits, it could not avail for our justification in any degree. It is indeed observable, that even they, who speak of atoning for our transgressions of the divine law by repentance, change their language when they have occasion to treat of the laws of human governments: you seldom hear them speak of a traitor or murderer making atonement for his crimes by *repentance*, but by *his death*. This sacrifice to justice the law demands: this alone expiates the offence: and if a criminal, however penitent or disposed to future obedience, escape punishment; the law is dispensed with, justice is relaxed, and no atonement made. But God's justice is perfect, and can admit of no relaxation; his law must be magnified and made honourable, and cannot be dispensed with. Not the repentance, but the eternal punishment, of the offender, is the atonement indispensably insisted upon, or one equally honourable to the

precept and sanction of the divine law. This the true penitent perceives or allows; he subscribes the sentence of his own condemnation, and humbly trusts in that vicarious atonement which the Son of God once made, and which is of infinite value and efficacy; and through which "God is JUST, and the Justifier of the believ-"er." That repentance, which is depended on for justification, is a proud unbelieving repentance, and not the humble repentance here treated of.

But in fact repentance, where it is genuine, is the gift of God. Thus St. Paul speaks on this subject to his beloved Timothy, "In meekness instructing those "that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will "give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the "truth, and that they may recover themselves out of "the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him "at his will."* In like manner the apostle Peter, before the Jewish rulers, declared concerning Jesus whom they had crucified: "Him hath God exalted to be a "Prince and Saviour, for to give repentance unto Is-"rael, and forgiveness of sins." And when the same apostle gave his brethren and the church at Jerusalem an account of the conversion of Cornelius and his household; they "glorified God, saying, Then hath "God to the Gentiles granted repentance unto "life."†

This accords to the prediction, or promise, which JEHOVAH gave by the prophet Zechariah, "I will "pour out upon the house of David, and upon the

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* 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26. † Acts v. 31. xi. 28.

" inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and sup-
" plication; and they shall look upon me whom they
" have pierced, and mourn for him, as one mourneth
" for his only son."* This was fulfilled in part, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the crucifiers of Christ, on the day of Pentecost; and when being pricked to the heart, and enquiring of the apostles, " what they " must do?" three thousand obeyed the call to " Repent " and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the " remission of sins." In entire harmony with these decisive testimonies of holy writ are those petitions in our excellent liturgy, which, alas! are often so familiar to the ear, as scarcely to excite the attention of the understanding, and not at all to affect the heart, of many professed worshippers in the established church: ' Let ' us beseech him to grant us true repentance and his ' holy Spirit.' ' That it may please thee to give us ' true repentance.' ' Create and make in us new and ' contrite hearts;' with expressions implying the same important truth, which continually occur in many parts of our most scriptural liturgy.

In fact, though we have so much cause for repentance, and *are in duty* bound to repent: yet our proud carnal hearts are naturally destitute of the least disposition or inclination to this duty. The shame therefore of our obstinate impenitency belongs to us: but the whole glory of our repentance, when the grace of God disposes and enables us to repent, is due to him, " who worketh in us to will and to do of his good

* Zech. xii. 10.

" pleasure." So far then are we from meriting any thing by repenting, that we are laid under fresh obligations to him, " who hath granted us repentance un- " to life." " Do not err, my beloved brethren, every " good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, " and cometh down from the Father of lights." Yet, on the other hand, let us not regard those, who represent our natural want of inclination, as an excuse for impenitency; not considering that the dominion of pride and the love of sin which renders us incapable of our duty, forms itself the very essence of that impenitent heart, which God abhors and will condemn, and which cannot be its own excuse.—Nor is the most penitent person in the world perfect in his repentance. No man hates sin in a degree equal to its hatefulness: no man condemns, abases, and abhors himself, as much as he ought to do: or as much as he would; did he more perfectly behold the glory of God, the excellency of the law, the evil of sin, and the multitude of his own transgressions; or had he more fixed views of the nature and glory of the sufferings of Jesus Christ. He, that is habitually most penitent, finds his repentance capable of increase, when his views are enlarged, and his heart is peculiarly affected with these discoveries: but even in these seasons his enlarged godly sorrow is little in comparison to what it ought to be, and would be, did he, instead of " seeing through a glass " darkly, see face to face." How far then doth the general frame of his spirit, when his mind is comparatively dark and unaffected, come short of the perfection of repentance! Over this every sincere Christian mourns, and for this seeks forgiveness.

For similar reasons, the *fruits* of repentance do nothing towards atoning for our sins, meriting a reward, or justifying us before God. Take a familiar illustration. You owe your tradesman a sum of money; and you now continue to deal with him for ready money only: yet the old debt is not by this diminished. But should you daily purchase to the value of a crown; and only pay daily one shilling, your debt would rapidly increase. Perfect obedience is no more than what is due to our Creator: so that after we have by sin for years run in arrear with him, did we obey during all the remainder of a long life as perfectly as an arch-angel, our love and obedience would be no more than is due for the present, and could do nothing towards discharging the old account: even with the apostle Paul's obedience the debt would rapidly increase. Sure I am, whilst I now write, that I this moment am more deeply deserving of condemnation than ever; because, though I hope sincerely penitent, I daily add recent transgressions to my former sins, and I shall certainly perish if Jesus do not plead for me, "Deliver him "from going down into the pit—behold the ran-"som."

This salvation, through the ransom and intercession of the Son of God, every true penitent cordially approves and thankfully embraces, and shall certainly participate. My brethren, an impenitent believer and a penitent unbeliever are ideal characters, which have no existence unless in some men's imagination; except where the repentance is counterfeit, and the faith dead. Genuine repentance and faith are twin graces produced together, thriving together, and forwarding

each other's growth. It is true some exercises of faith precede, and produce, repentance in the regenerate soul: but repentance precedes, and makes way for that exercise of faith, which interests the soul in the merits of Christ for salvation. The belief of the existence and perfections of God, his law and government; of our relations, obligations, and accountableness to him; of the future state, the day of judgment, heaven and hell, always precedes repentance, and is influential in leading men to it: a belief of several truths respecting Jesus Christ and his salvation, generally though perhaps not always, precedes. But he must be already in some degree penitent, who can cordially approve and embrace that salvation: for whilst a man remains impenitent, his proud heart will have insuperable objections to it; insuperable I say, in any other way, than by that change of judgment and disposition, which is denominated repentance.

The salvation revealed in the gospel exalts God upon the throne, and requires the sinner to submit to his authority and righteousness, and give him the whole glory of his salvation. This appears most equitable to the true penitent, and to him alone. 'Let God be glo-'rified, says he, by all in heaven and earth, whatever 'becomes of me: but should he mercifully save so 'vile and worthless a rebel, I shall be an eternal monu-'ment of the riches of his mercy, and the power of his 'grace.'—The gospel is intended to put honour upon the law: "It is holy, just and good," says the penitent soul: "I consent unto it that it is good," 'and I 'have deserved its awful curse for my vile transgres-'sions: I rejoice to see this holy law magnified in the

'obedience unto death of God incarnate: I long to have 'it written in my heart by the finger of the Spirit: and 'my prayer is,' "Oh that my ways were directed to "keep thy righteous precepts."—The gospel shews sin to be exceedingly sinful, and discovers its infinite odiousness and just demerit; the true penitent, and he alone, irreconcilably hates all sin, even that which was his most darling indulgence. The gospel abases the sinner, silences his excuses, rejects his pleas, strips him of his distinctions; and without regard to his learning, wisdom, wealth, honour, morality, or amiable character among men, treats him as a sinner condemned to die, deserving and fitted for destruction. To this the true penitent, and he alone, cordially submits. "I loathe and abhor myself." "To me belongs "shame, and confusion of face," is the genuine expression of his humble heart.

The gospel honours Christ, as the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End, the all in all: Thus he appears to the true penitent, and to none else. In his person, undertaking, righteousness, atonement, resurrection, mediatorial exaltation, offices, (as King, Priest, and Prophet,) intercession, instructions, example, and Spirit of grace, he appears to the humbled sinner altogether suitable, sufficient, and precious. On every other side despair lowers: the glory of God, and the honour of the law, demand his destruction: But here hope brightens; here he sees God glorious and sinners saved: here he sees every thing exactly suited to his wants, and his desires: here he may have his sins pardoned, his corruptions subdued, his ignorance removed, grace communicated, strength renewed, and

every thing bestowed freely, without money and without price, which can raise him from the brink of hell, and the borders of despair, to the "lively hope of an "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and unfading." Christ appears to him "the Pearl of great price," "the chief among ten thousand, and altogether love-"ly." "He counts all but loss for the excellency of the "knowledge of him." To him he flees, though with trembling heart, lest he should meet with a repulse; with trembling hand he lays hold on this only hope; to him he cleaves in the midst of discouragements and delays, and answers every rising despondency with, "Lord, to whom shall I go, thou hast the words of "eternal life." Nothing but impenitent pride and love of sin render men blind to the glory, deaf to the voice, or negligent of the salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ: nor can any thing but a penitent sense of the evil of sin, and the misery of a sinner, reconcile the proud heart of man to this salvation.

Though repentance therefore do not in any degree merit pardon; yet it is that disposition of mind, which both prepares the soul to receive it, and renders the possessor a meet object on whom a holy God may honourably bestow it: and no further obstacle remaining, divine justice being satisfied in the sufferings of the Redeemer; the point yielded by the sinner's repentance that he did deserve to perish, and is saved by free grace; and his heart being now rendered willing to be saved in the appointed way; he shall, without all doubt or delay, have salvation, and the consolation which springs from it.

Were more encouragement needful, I might lead

your attention to the many examples, with which the word of God furnishes us, of sinners who had committed the most attrocious crimes, and born the most infamous characters, for complicated long-continued guilt, who on repentance were pardoned and saved. It will be enough to recite a few of their names: such were Manasseh; the woman who was a sinner, a scandalous and notorious sinner; the thief on the cross; Saul the persecutor; and the very men who crucified the Prince of Life! These instances are doubtless recorded purposely for the encouragement of those, who are ready to conclude, that their sins are too many and too great to be forgiven; and they form a very important proof and exemplification of our doctrine; that no degree of guilt can exclude the true penitent from forgiveness; through the blood of Christ. For although our Lord speaks of some, who sin against the Holy Ghost, and shall never be forgiven; and the apostle John mentions a sin unto death, which they who have committed should not be prayed for: yet St. Paul extricates us out of this difficulty, by informing us, "that "it is impossible to renew them to repentance;" which forms indeed an awful warning, to those who harden their hearts against conviction and in impenitency, but affords no exception to our doctrine, and need give no discouragement to the penitent soul.

And now, sinners, you see the necessity of repentance, the real nature of it, and the abundant encouragement you have to repent. I would hope that from regard to your eternal welfare, you will set about it in good earnest; not only in preference to your vain amusements and dissipations, but even to your most

important business and interests, which are of no consequence in comparison with this "one thing needful." Arise then, and be doing, and the Lord will both assist and prosper your endeavours.

PART IV.

THE PROPER SEASONS FOR REPENTANCE.

SUCH persons as are but superficially acquainted with the credulity of man, and the artifice of Satan; as have taken but little notice of the workings of their own hearts, and made but little observation of what passes around them, may be apt to conclude this part of our subject needless: yet I trust, it will be found to be of great importance, and essentially necessary, to a discourse concerning the proper seasons for repentance.

The words of the Psalmist, quoted by the Apostle, comprise what I shall urge on this head; "To-day, "if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart." The present time alone is our's: yesterday is irrecoverably gone; to-morrow we may be in eternity! Were then all of you in the prime of youth, I would endeavour to enforce on all the necessity of *early* repentance.

To such then I first address myself. Consider, *young sinner*, that custom is second nature: thy innate depravity forges the chains which hold thee in bondage, but custom rivets them upon thee. This is not mere speculation,—it is the language of inspiration. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leo-"pard his spots? then may he, who is ACCUSTOMED "to do evil, learn to do well."

Repentance may be considered, either as the work of divine grace in us, or as our own work by the assistance of divine grace. "Work out your own salvation "with fear and trembling; for it is God, that worketh "in you to will and to do, of his good pleasure." Doubtless it is always alike easy to Almighty God, to change the heart and renew the sinner: yet the sinner, when thus influenced to will, and to do, may find vastly more difficulty in some cases and circumstances, than he would in others. When wordly interests, cares, and projects, together with customary indulgences, have added strength to your lusts, you will find repentance vastly more arduous than at present. You will then find it vastly more difficult to cease to do evil, and to learn to do well, to separate from the ungodly, and to habituate your appetites and passions to controul. If you now delay, and *should* hereafter repent, you will bitterly know what it is to "pluck "out a right eye, and to cut off a right hand." When to the opposition of lusts grown ungovernable by gratification, and remorse for sins which exceed calculation, bitter reflection* on the irreparable mischief you have been doing all your life; you add what it will cost you to renounce the friendship, to withstand the persuasions and enticements, to resist the arguments, to face the scorn and bear the reproach, of those comrades in iniquity, with whom you are hitherto happily unconnected: whilst perhaps your own children, train-

* Consider in this place, what hath been urged of the necessity of restitution, Part II. He who repents early escapes that difficulty.

ed up in wickedness, or the wife or husband of your bosom, whom you have ignorantly espoused, may be among the number of those, who are an offence unto you. Are you therefore in youth, in early youth, yea, in childhood? you are not too young to be sinners, both by nature and practice; evil dispositions and evil actions render repentance both needful and reasonable; and without it you must perish in your sins. Even now, therefore, I call upon you in the name of God, to "repent, and turn to God, and do "works meet for repentance." Listen not to your corruptions, to your companions, to the cruel murderer of souls, who would persuade you that it is soon enough yet.—Millions are now in outer darkness, who on earth, intended some time to repent, but imagined they had time enough before them. Perhaps there are scarcely any, who did not once think as you are now thinking, and flatter themselves as you do. Will you also trifle with the Almighty, till his patience be wearied out, and he cut you off, as he hath those who thus provoked him before you; and send you to be their companions whose example you would imitate?*

Do you imagine you shall find less difficulty, or have more resolution to break through difficulties, hereafter? Alas! your difficulties will daily both be multiplied and gather force; and you will find less and less inclination or resolution to encounter them. Fear, shame, and conscience will make gradually more fee-

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* Jer. xiii. 27.—Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem, WILT thou not be made clean?—When shall it ONCE be?

ble resistance: restraints of education will wear off, and you will grow bolder in iniquity. Finding respite from punishment, you will grow more secure and hardened in sin, till perhaps God will give you over to incurable obstinacy.

Do you imagine that sinful pleasures can afford you more satisfaction, than is to be found in serious godliness? Poor deluded souls, I compassionate your case, whilst I abhor the blasphemous supposition. Once I thought the same; I bless God for undeceiving me, and beg of him to grant you the same mercy. "There "is no peace, saith my God, for the wicked." "Va- "nity and vexation" are stamped upon all created enjoyments. They consist of eager expectations; continual anxiety, disappointments, and mortifications; a few turbulent short-lived gratifications, insipid amusements, and fatiguing pursuits of pleasure. The mind of the poor deluded man, who thus seeks happiness where it is not, is uneasy in waiting for the season of enjoyment; surfeited and dissatisfied even at the moment he longed for; pained at the retrospect; alarmed when he looks forward to death and judgment; and he can find no respite from anxiety, but by banishing reflection, and foregoing the noblest privilege of the rational nature.—Your smiles, ye votaries of pleasure, are hypocritical; your mirth affectation; your heart is heaviness in the midst of your loudest peals of laughter: remorse of conscience and foreboding fears often disturb even your most jovial hours, and extort the unwilling sigh; but they render solitude and reflection bitterness; whilst the least remembrance of death, or symptom of its approach, excites a horror I have felt, but cannot describe.

This is earthly, ungodly pleasure, even when health, affluence, and all conceivable advantages concur to add relish to it: but when sickness seizes the poor wretch, who knows no other joy; when poverty and adversity depress, and death approaches, his case is so miserable, and his anguish so intolerable, that no words can sufficiently express it.

But true religion is the source of the sweetest serenity, the most refined delight, the most exquisite enjoyment. From conscious integrity, peace with God, submission to his will, and reliance on his providential and gracious care, spring calm content with the present, and serene expectations of the future: and these form a "peace of God, which passeth all understand-"ing." Victory over the fear of death, and a well-grounded and lively hope of eternal happiness, support the soul in adversity, and increase the enjoyment of prosperity. Contemplation on the glories of the divine character, and the wonders God hath wrought, issuing in admiring love, adoring gratitude, and fervent praises, inspires the soul at some seasons "with joy "unspeakable, and full of glory." A life of communion with God, an uniform walk in his pleasant ways, an increasing assurance and experience of his love, fill the christian's peaceful soul with an abiding satisfaction; which nothing greatly interrupts but the stirrings of corruption, the force of temptation, and the imperfection of his obedience. By these at times guilt burdens his mind, and sorrow oppresses his heart; yet even godly sorrow itself rather increases than lessens his enjoyment: and if he for a season be unhappy, it is not because he is religious, but because he is no

more so. Nor is there any rational satisfaction which he doth not enjoy with more real relish, because with more moderation, than others do: for real religion abridges us of no enjoyment, but that which is irrational, debasing, or inordinate. In short, a flash of lightning, which for a moment interrupts, and then increases, the midnight gloom; bears more comparison to the cheerful genial light of the sun; than the most exquisite gratifications of sin, to those joys which the real diligent christian experiences from day to day. "Come taste and see how gracious the Lord is, and "how blessed they are who trust in him."

But doth Satan persuade you, that you shall have time enough hereafter? Alas! can you be the dupes of so bare-faced an artifice? You know you have no lease of your lives, nor are sure of beholding to-morrow's light. Many as young, as healthy, as vigorous, as you, are followed to the tomb. Dare you risk eternal happiness or misery on such a peradventure? Reflect also, that your lives are in the hands of that God, whom your sins have greatly provoked, and your presumptuous impenitency still more. May he not even at this moment be saying, "Thou fool, this night "shall thy soul be required of thee?" Hast thou not, deluded sinner, done enough already to provoke him to it? And shouldst thou slight the present warning, and rush into forbidden pleasure: seriously consider, whether thou mayest not reasonably fear, lest in the midst of some daring provocation, he should "cut "thee off with a stroke!" and "then a great ransom "cannot deliver thee."

Dare you flatter yourselves with the presumption of repenting, if not before, yet on a death-bed? Alas, how many are cut off by sudden death! how many bereft of reason by the violence of disease! how many are seized with madness,—incurable madness! how many, I say, perish without one cry for mercy, and eternally curse their folly, in being the dupes of such a delusion! "Surely in vain is the net spread in the "sight of any bird." You evidently see the design of Satan in this temptation: he aims only to lull you into security, till he can plunge you into despair; and then he will insult over you. But even should you have a space given you before death, can you reasonably hope, that God will then give you his grace, which you have so long refused? Are you sure you shall improve those hours? Can you at last in your own strength, when you are languishing under a violent disorder, overcome all those difficulties, which you have considered as next to insurmountable, even with the assistance of divine grace, all the days of your health? Will you need any additional anguish, when your bones are full of strong pain, and nature is even sinking under the load? Can you then be sure that your repentance is real and genuine, when you have no opportunity of bringing it to the trial by the fruits it produces? One instance indeed is recorded of a dying penitent, to shew that repentance even in those circumstances is neither impossible nor unavailing; and but one, to teach us that such cases are very rare. To-day, then, make sure of this important concern. "Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine "eye-lids: deliver thyself as a roe from the hand

" of the hunter, and as a bird from the snare of the " fowler."

" Remember therefore your Creator in the days of " your youth." Remember your obligations and relations to him, and your offences against him: remember, repent, and seek forgiveness without delay, through that Saviour, who hath promised, that " they who " seek him early shall find him."

But, perhaps, this best season is already elapsed with many; and it is too late to exhort them to early repentance. Perhaps some are secretly lamenting: ' My youth hath been spent in vanity and ungodliness: ' yea, the prime of life is irrecoverably past, and I am ' growing hoary in the ways of wickedness: What ' must I do? Is there nothing for me, but a certain ' fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indigna- ' tion?' Indeed, my fellow sinner, thy case is very deplorable: thy day is almost spent; the night, wherein no man can work, is swiftly approaching: thy work is not begun; yea, all thou hast been doing, during the whole course of thy life, must be as it were undone. Thou must travel back again, with weeping and supplication, all the way thou hast trodden for so many years. Death, judgment, and eternity press upon thy unprepared soul: the grave is yawning for thy enfeebled body: and should death seize upon thee ere repentance hath taken place, it had been good for thee, hadst thou never been born. Still, however, thy case is not desperate: though provoked by thy impenitency, the Lord yet renews his compassionate invitations. If then thy heart begin to relent; if remorse embitter thy soul; if thou art at length willing to acknow-

ledge thy offence, and seek his face; come, and cast thyself at his feet, and venture upon his mercy and truth, who saith, "Him that cometh unto me I will "*in no wise* cast out." If *indeed thou art renewed* to repentance, though "at the ninth, or eleventh hour, "thou shalt be equalled with those who have born "the heat and burden of the day." Herein lies the danger and the difficulty; but with God all things are possible: he "can change the Ethiopian's skin, and "the leopard's spots; and by his power, even thou "who hast been long accustomed to do evil, mayest "learn to do well." Admire then his long-suffering, who has born with thy impenitent disregard of his precepts and promises, his authority and invitations, for forty, fifty, sixty, or seventy years: and has neither cut thee off by death, nor deprived thee of thy much abused reason, nor left thee to utter insensibility. This is distinguishing patience!

Methinks, aged sinner, I see thy relentings, hear thy groans, and witness thy tears, confusion, and despondency; whilst the crimes of a long life pass in review before thee, the sword of divine justice is brandished against thee, conscience reproaches, and Satan insinuates that it is now too late. Yea, thou art even inclined once more to listen to his insinuations; and to conclude that there is no hope, and that after such a life thy late repentance and worthless services will never meet with acceptance. But reject this dishonourable thought, resist the lying tempter; when he persuaded thee heretofore, that it was too early in life to repent, he led thee to the brink of an awful precipice: if he prevail in persuading thee that it is now

too late, he pushes thee headlong into everlasting ruin. In both he acts in character, "a liar and a murderer "from the beginning."

"God's ways are above our ways, and his thoughts "above our thoughts," and his mercies "are higher "than the heavens," else the case of the aged sinner would be desperate. But now, though he will not accept the late repentance, and the feeble obedience of one poor hour, because they merit such a favour; yet for his own name's sake, and through the atonement and intercession of Jesus, he will pardon, justify, and save all that truly repent and believe the gospel. This discovery of the unspeakable riches of divine love, whilst it gives encouragement to the drooping heart, ought to increase the sinner's remorse for having so neglected and abused a God of such excellency and mercy; and to quicken his diligence, in availing himself of the divine patience, by fleeing for refuge to the hope still set before him. "To-day, if ye will hear his "voice," before to-morrow, embrace his proferred mercy, and harden not your hearts.—And whatever stage of human life you are now arrived at, I can only inculcate the same exhortation. "Behold, now is the "accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation;" and suggest the same petition; "So teach us to num- "ber our days, that we may apply our hearts unto "wisdom."* "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, "do it speedily," and "with thy might; for there is "no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom

* Psalm xc. 12.

" in the grave, whither thou goest."* I have shewn you, that this, of all other, is the most necessary and important work you can find to do: make then no delay, lest " he sware in his wrath, that you shall never " enter into his rest."

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* Eccles. ix. 10.

PART V.

THE MEANS OF REPENTANCE.

IN entering on this part of our subject, a formidable objection may be started, and even grounded on what hath already been discoursed upon, against treating on the means of repentance at all. It hath been observed, that repentance is the gift of God to us, the purchase of Christ for us, and the work of the Holy Spirit in us: 'How then,' it will be objected, 'can 'we do any thing towards it? If it please God to be-'stow it upon us, we shall repent without difficulty or 'labour: if not, our labour will be altogether to no 'purpose.'—It is indeed a certain truth, that repentance is the gift of God, as it has been proved from plain scriptural testimonies; but it is equally true, and capable of the same proof, that we must diligently labour for it. Nor is there any inconsistency betwixt these distinct views of the subject: they only appear inconsistent to our dark and narrow apprehensions. Upon a similar occasion, the Truth, the Word, and the Wisdom of God saith, "LABOUR not for the "meat that perisheth, but for that meat, which en-"dureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man

"shall GIVE you."* Christ will give it most freely, but you must labour for it most diligently. Thus the harvest is the gift of God, who giveth seed to the sower; who giveth rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, and causeth the earth to yield her increase: yet must the husbandman labour. In both temporal and spiritual concerns, God gives not to the slothful, but to the diligent; and his bounty does not supercede, but encourage, our activity.

He works in us, that we may work out our own salvation; he hath appointed means, and commanded us to use them. Obedience is our duty. We ought to use the means, and trust in the Lord to render them effectual; but not to depend on them, or rest in them. They, who seriously desire to repent and turn to God, will manifest their sincerity, by thus using every proper means with diligence and perseverance: nor shall their labour be in vain; "for every one that ask-"eth receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to "him that knocketh it shall be opened." But negligence will detect hypocrites, and justify God in their condemnation. Something then must be done, in order to our being made partakers of repentance: not under the notion of merit, as if we made the purchase, for it is the gift of God: not under the notion of efficacious operation; for it is the work of divine grace: but in order to evidence our integrity in purposing repentance; and that we may be found waiting upon God in the way of his appointment. And though the means will not effect the end, without efficacious grace:

* John vi. 27.

yet they are quite as much calculated to produce the effect, as medicines are to remove sickness, or agriculture to produce the crop, both of which are rendered effectual only by the divine blessing.

I. Then, Consider your ways as David did, "I "thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy "testimonies."* Are you now desirous truly to repent? Retire frequently into your chamber, shun the hurry and dissipation of a crowd, and court solitude, that you may recollect yourselves, and seriously commune with your own heart. There minutely review your whole past life: with exactness survey your thoughts, words, and actions, ever since the dawn of reason, or from the beginning of recollection. Ask yourselves seriously such questions as these: What have you been scheming, intending, pursuing all your days? What hath been the standard of your judgment, and rule of your conduct? The opinion of men, or the word of God; the fashions of the world, or the example of Christ? What have your affections been fixed on? Have you given God or the world, your heart: I mean your warmest desires, and most devoted attachment? Have you intentionally been pleasing God, or yourselves? Have you been seeking his glory in every thing; or your own ease, interest, gratification, and honour? In what have your time and money been most cheerfully expended? In works of piety and charity; or in gratifying your sensuality, pride, and ambition? Have you been laying up, or aiming to lay up, treasures in heaven, or on earth? Have you improved health, prosperity, abilities, and influence, in pro-

* Psalm cxix. 59.

moting the glory of God, the interests of piety, and the good of men? Or have you done no good, but mischief with them? Hath God been the delightful subject of your meditations and conversation? or have you willingly and habitually forgotten him, and regarded religious thoughts and converse as insipid and irksome? Hath the sweet work of prayer and praise, the worship of God, and hearing and reading his word, been your pleasure, or your task? Have you been out of your element when thus employed, and found more charms, and experienced more satisfaction, in licentious company or dissipated mirth? Have you habitually reverenced the sacred name of God, hallowed his sabbaths, and frequented his sanctuary with reverence and devotion? Or have you taken his name in vain,* despised his ordinances, polluted

* By taking the name of God in vain, I do not mean, nor does the Bible mean, merely blasphemy, perjury, and profane swearing; but every jest or expression, which implies want of reverence to the name of God, his word, and sacred things. Almost in all companies, the conversation even though trifling and polluting, is incessantly interlarded with the words GOD, LORD, CHRIST, and such like; which are formed into hackneyed phrases, and used as mere expletives to adorn a period: or as notes of admiration, approbation, or indignation. Nothing can more fully discover the degree, in which sinful man despises the glorious God, than this general and almost universal practice. Without pleasure, profit, or apparent temptation, in violation of an express command, and in defiance of an awful threatening; that tremendous name, which impresses angels with holy awe, and at which devils tremble, is made man's mere by-word. But when the affronted JEHOVAH shall at last address the sinner, "Wherefore hast thou

his sabbaths, or mocked him with an hypocritical worship?

What have your imaginations been? pure and heavenly, or lewd, ambitious, envious, covetous, revengeful, and abominable? What has your discourse been? edifying, serious and candid; or profane, polluted, trifling, slanderous, and dissembling? What have your tempers been? meek, peaceable, and kind; or turbulent, contentious, and overbearing? Have you behaved, as the word of God directs, in relative life, as parents, children, husbands, wives, masters, or servants? Has equity, disinterestedness, and kindness; or selfishness, covetousness, and fraud, directed your worldly business? Have you in sobriety, chastity, and temperance, governed your appetites and passions?

But I have already exceeded due bounds in this specimen of queries, which you ought with all impartiality to propose to yourselves; allowing conscience, after mature recollection, to return a faithful answer. In short, set the law of God, and the example of Christ, before your eyes, make diligent search into

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"despised the commandment of the LORD?" and he find that God will "not hold him guiltless;" his profane trifling will be at an end; and he will be constrained to tremble at that name he would not reverence.—The inefficacy of much apparent religion, and the worthlessness of much evangelical profession, are demonstrated, by their failing to depress this awful profaneness. All true christians, who worship God in spirit and truth, are, by that profound veneration they bear to the Lord, cured effectually of this practice; and ought to unite in bearing testimony against it, boldly, in all companies.

your secret practices, intentions, and inclinations: steadily view your likeness, and estimate your character in this manner, until you know what manner of persons you are. Shrink not back from that view of self-deformity, which will thus be presented to you: but look, and look again, till you "abhor your-"selves, and repent in dust and ashes."

The man, whose circumstances are embarrassed, may possibly retrieve all, if he be content in time to look well into his affairs, and be made sensible how bad they are: but to shrink from this inspection, and to banish reflection, on a disagreeable subject, completes many a man's ruin. Thus multitudes are afraid, or averse, fully to examine their own character, conduct, and state; they flee from reflection, because uneasy and mortifying; and huddle up all in an unexamined obscurity, till they rush blindfold into remediless ruin. But by carefully examining how matters stand betwixt God and our souls, the danger is discovered, the remedy is at hand, and our destruction happily prevented. Shift not then this business: slur it not over, but go through with it, though disagreeable and mortifying: and you will find yourselves amply recompensed, not only by its subserviency to repentance, but to future solid and abiding peace of conscience.

II. Examine your heart and life daily. Nor only say, 'What have I done?' but 'What am I now do-'ing?' "The heart is deceitful above all things, and "desperately wicked, who can know it?" And the Lord pronounces him "a fool, who trusteth in his "own heart." Men retain their good opinion and

confidence concerning themselves; because they remain strangers to their own hearts, for want of daily examination: for the only way to discover a concealed villain, is carefully to watch him. Watch then your own hearts: examine well your own lives: keep before your eyes the requirements of the divine law, as far as known: search the scriptures daily for further information: review your daily conduct, judging of it by that infallible standard: descend to particulars; to omissions and commissions, words and actions, intentions and imaginations, deficiencies and defilements in duty, and backwardness to it. This will prove of vast importance to self-knowledge, and consequently to self-abasement. Though difficult at first, it will soon become natural and pleasant to the true christian: it will continually keep the heart humble and watchful, and the conscience tender; and dependence on the mercy of God, through the blood of Christ, for pardon, in continual exercise. This conduct, like well arranged accounts, will prevent a thousand anxieties and terrors in times of danger and sickness, and at the hour of death. Grudge not, then, this labour, if you are ambitious to be called disciples of Jesus, and do not "judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting "life."

III. Meditate frequently upon such subjects, as tend to excite and increase in the heart, the sense of the heinousness of sin: labouring with your reluctant minds to bring and keep them close to this exercise. Impenitency is greatly the effect of extenuating notions of the malignity of sin; repentance must then flow from a sense of its hatefulness. 'Tis needless to

enumerate the various subjects, which, duly meditated upon, may have this effect; and it would lead us into repetitions. Such are the majesty and excellency, authority and law, threatenings and judgments of God: his righteous severity against sinning angels, against Adam and his whole posterity, against the inhabitants of the old world, against Sodom and Gomorrah, against the nations of Canaan, against the people of Israel, in a variety of instances, especially in the final destruction of Jerusalem, and the continued dispersion of the Jewish nation. All these, and others too numerous for me to mention, are but forerunners and emblems of that everlasting destruction, with which in the future state all they shall be punished, "who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our "Lord Jesus Christ." "Now, we know that the judg-"ment of God is according unto truth:" these awful instances of his tremendous justice shew us his judgment of the evil of sin, and what it really deserves: even *his judgment*, who is LOVE, and delighteth not in the death of a sinner; but punishes solely to express his holy hatred of that abominable thing, which we lodge in our bosom, and in behalf of which we plead. These things were written on purpose to lead us to judge concerning sin, as God judgeth: and this will surely lead us to unfeigned repentance.

IV. Meditate frequently and intensely on the death of Christ. Consider who he was, and what he suffered, and wherefore he suffered. Purposely retire to contemplate this surprising scene; and yield not to weariness or indisposition, till you arrive at some heart-affecting views of a crucified Saviour. Superficial speculations

may amuse the fancy, and furnish out conversation: but without deeply examining and well digesting this subject, and being thus established in judgment concerning it, we can never in habitual experience reconcile godly sorrow with abiding peace and joy in the Lord, or humble repentance with a lively hope of everlasting life. Here that christian, who turns his eyes from other objects, that he may stedfastly look unto Jesus.* will perceive that the awful vengeance of God against sin, before considered, proceeds not from want of love to the persons of sinners, but from abhorrence of moral evil, the affect of a perfect view of its infinite malignity: that this judgment and conduct are essential to his most perfect character, and requisite to his glory as moral Governor of the universe. When, therefore, in boundless love, he determined the salvation of sinners, he would "not spare his own Son;" but would sooner deliver him, "in whom his soul delighted, "to the most intense agonies and ignomious death, than leave sin unpunished, or permit his intelligent creatures to remain ignorant of his infinite hatred of it. For the instruction of the whole universe to eternal ages, in these and other important truths, respecting the divine character, law, and government, did the Son of God "sufferonce for sins, the just for the un-"just."

Here likewise the sinner may learn to estimate the worth of his immortal soul; the vanity of this world; the dangerous situation he is placed in; the difficulty there is in a sinner's salvation, (which cost him, who

* Heb. xii. 2. αφορωντες.

created and upholds all things by his powerful word, such humiliation and sufferings;) the unspeakable love of God, and his willingness to save sinners; seeing "he hath not withheld his only Son from us." These are lessons, eminently conducive to repentance; and which can be learned to such advantage in no other way, as by "looking unto Jesus," and meditating on his sufferings. He then, who sincerely would repent, must daily retire in contemplation to Gethsemane and Golgotha.

V. Lastly, The whole must be rendered effectual by fervent and importunate prayer, without which all other means will be in vain. Whether we read, or meditate, or examine our lives and hearts, or whatever we do, prayer must accompany all; for it is God who takes away the heart of stone, and gives the heart of flesh, and renews us unto repentance; and him we must earnestly supplicate to bestow on us this good and perfect gift. But alas! it is extremely difficult to prevail upon men to get alone, and on their bended knees, day by day, to beseech the Lord, in the name of Jesus Christ, to work this change in them, and bestow this gift on them. To read, to hear sermons, and other things of a public nature, men may be more easily induced. A mere form or task of devotion, may also be reconciled with a self-sufficient and worldly spirit and conduct: but real prayer stands in direct opposition to them all. It is the very language of indigence and dependence, and earnest longings after God and holiness. In order to pray aright, a man must know, in some measure, how vast and various his wants are; he must understand his true interest and happiness;

he must supremely value the favour an image of God. No man can truly pray for spiritual blessings, who doth not carefully review his life, explore his heart, and in a measure know his own character; who is not in some degree acquainted with the majesty, holiness, and heart-searching knowledge of God, his own absolute dependence upon him, his relations and obligations to him, and offences committed against him; and who is not, in a general way at least, instructed in the way of access for sinners to an offended God, through the atoning blood of his Son, and humbly willing to approach in this appointed way. Such a one draws near with reverential fear and deep self-abasement, confessing his unworthiness, and imploring forgiveness; encouraged only by believing apprehensions of the rich mercy of God to sinners through the mediation of Jesus. Conscious also of ignorance, weakness, and depravity, in humble sincerity and earnest longings, he pleads the promises of the word of God, and implores the teaching, strengthening, sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. Faith, repentance, and universal holiness, he longs for, feels his want of, expects, and seeks daily from God in prayer. In all this, his words express, but not fully, the very meaning of his heart. Daily he thus opens and pours out his soul unto God, turning the precepts and promises he reads or hears from the word of God, into fervent petitions. All his sorrows, anxieties, and perplexities he spreads before the Lord, seeking, in every exigence, support, direction, and consolation from him; subjoining continual thanksgivings for mercies received and intercessions for all around him; and submissively referring himself, in every case, to the

will and wisdom of his heavenly Father. "Thus is "he careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer "and supplication, with thanksgivings, makes his re- "quests known unto God;" "and casts his care up- "on him, who careth for him." Such prayer as this cannot be taught by man, but must be the effect of "the pouring out of the Spirit of grace and supplica- "tion;" who communicating divine light to the under- standing, and holy dispositions to the heart, excites fervent and spiritual desires in the soul, and teacheth us to pray with "groanings that cannot be uttered." It is therefore called in the word of God, "praying in "and by the Spirit;" as opposed to a "form of god- "liness," or good words spoken with the mouth, without suitable affections and desires in the heart.* He whose words express more than *he* intends, or heartily desires, prays *formally* and hypocritically; He, who means all his words express, and more than he can find words to express, evidently prays spiritually, and though he may not be sensible of it, is assisted in prayer by the Holy Spirit.†

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* Saul, previous to conversion, was a strict Pharisee, who made *long prayers;* yet when the Lord spoke of his conversion to Annanias, he said with emphasis, "Behold he prayeth." Be- fore, he might read or repeat long forms, or pray fluently in extemporaneous language: but now he feels his indigence, de- pendence, and unworthiness, and really prays with suitable de- sires and dispositions.

† I am far from thinking that no prayer is accepted, which comes not up to this description; but this is the *nature* of a sin- ner's praying for spiritual blessings; to this in a degree propor-

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But if nothing, however specious or ostentatious, be prayer, which has not in it something of this nature, (as I trust, upon mature examination of the scripture, will be found the case:) then evidently, the proud, ungodly, and carnal-minded, cannot pray aright. Nor can it be deemed strange, if, when a sinner is *first* seriously impressed with concern for his soul, he hath great reluctancy to this spiritual exercise, and knows not how to go about it. For even real christians, who are arrived at some measure of stability, and have made considerable proficiency in a life of communion with God, meet with considerable difficulty in this grand concern; have need habitually to be humbled for neglects and imperfections; and want continually fresh supplies of divine assistance to excite, teach, and enable them thus to pray always and not faint.

Satan also will oppose to the uttermost all his artifices, to prevent a sinner's approaching to the throne of grace: well knowing, that in the critical season, when any person is under serious impressions, if he can be prevailed on to neglect prayer, they will soon wear off, and leave the conscience more insensible than before. The business, pleasures, diversions, and society of the world; and that scorn with which ungodly men treat a life of prayer, combine their influence, in aid of natural corruption and Satan's temptation, to keep the poor convinced sinner from the throne of grace. And, as if these hindrances were not sufficient, even some, professing serious godliness, (whose intention may be

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tioned to the measure of his grace, a believer attains; and every accepted prayer has something in it of the same nature.

better than their judgment,) extremely increase the difficulty, by strenuously contending, that unconverted persons ought not to pray, or be exhorted to it.*

Such indeed are the pride and ungodliness of man, that left to himself, and under Satan's influence, he never *will* pray in sincerity. Confounding the depraved disinclination with a real want of ability, many thence argue the want of obligation. But this argument, if it prove any thing, proves too much; and would conse-

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* If a man ought not to pray before conversion, he ought to *know*, that is, *be sure*, of his conversion, before he prays: for if he be not sure of his conversion, he cannot be sure whether he may, and ought to pray or not. Thus *assurance* springs up in a sinner's heart all at once; and now having received he may ask; having found he may begin to seek; the door being opened he may begin to knock!—Surely at first glance every one must see this to be absurd and unscriptural, yea, antiscriptural. Truly all ought to pray, but none will in sincerity, until the Holy Spirit in some degree inclines the heart. Then a man feels an inclination to do that, which before was his duty, though he did it not: frequently he knows not from whence this change proceeds: but is encouraged, by such scriptures as that before alluded to, (Matt. vii. 7, 8. or Isaiah lv. 6, 7.) "Seek ye the "Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is "near. Let the wicked forsake his way." Thus he begins to ask and seek; and in consequence to receive and find: in this way giving diligence he makes his calling and election sure: and this statement reconciles all the different views the scripture gives us of this matter. The Lord seeking us when lost, and being found of us when we sought him not, inclines us, (though we be not aware whence this inclination comes) to seek him in prayer; and thus we receive all spiritual and eternal blessings in the way of asking and receiving.

quently repeal the law and abrogate the gospel, and furnish the devil himself with an apology, by making inward depravity a justification of outward rebellion: the desperate wickedness of the heart, for the desperate wickedness of the life. For certain it is, that man is as much disinclined to keep the whole law, or to repent and believe the gospel, as he is to pray; and will never do either one or the other, if left to himself, destitute of the influence of divine grace. But doth this indeed justify all our transgressions of the law, and contempt of the gospel?

Again, prayer is an important part of that worship and obedience which the law requires: and it is also the grand means of receiving from Jesus new covenant blessings. He then, who prays not, at once breaks the law, and contemns the gospel: "and he that keeps the "whole law, and* *thus* offends in one point, is guil- "ty of all."† If then a sinner ought not to pray, he is justifiable in breaking the whole law, and equally justifiable in neglecting the salvation of the gospel! In fact however, our depraved inclinations are in no respect the measure of our duty, but the direct opposite. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; is not sub- "ject to *the law of* God, nor indeed can be." The law, to which the carnal mind *cannot* be subject, is the measure of our duty. This men *cannot* obey, because of the depravity of their nature, which enhances instead of extenuates their guilt. Men ought to love

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* Numbers xv. 30, 31. "The soul that doeth ought pre- "sumptuously, the same reproacheth the Lord—he hath de- "spised the Word of the Lord."

† James ii. 10, 11.

God and one another: having sinned, they ought to repent: they ought to believe and pray, to deny themselves and mortify their lusts: But they do not. What is the reason? They cannot. But in what sense is this true? In fact, because they dislike God's service, hate his law, reject his authority, despise his gospel, and prefer the gratification of their lusts: And because these hateful dispositions are so predominant in them, that without the interposition of omnipotence they are insuperable. Can these hateful dispositions then be seriously urged as an excuse? Will any dare to urge them at the day of judgment? No, "every mouth will "then be stopped, and all the world shall be found "guilty before God." I should not in this place have touched upon this controversial subject, had I not observed how greedily this poison is drunk down, and how fatally it operates in stupifying the conscience, flattering the pride, and apologizing for the sloth, of mankind.

Instead of thus abetting, we should endeavour to counteract, these artifices of Satan, and to combat the reluctancy of a sinner's heart, by shewing the absolute necessity of prayer unto salvation; enforcing the invitations to the throne of grace; expatiating on the promises made to all who call upon the Lord; explaining the nature of prayer; directing him in the new and living Way to the throne of grace; answering his objections, obviating his discouragements, representing it as *our* privilege, and unspeakable consolation; and exhorting him to draw near, and share our happiness: for we may be assured that they, who are thus excited

to pray, will in due time "render unto God the "praise of making them to differ."

But I return from this digression. My fellow sinners, you must pray or perish.—Your backwardness to pray should humble you, and stir you up to overcome it, especially by crying unto the Lord to incline your heart by his grace to love and delight in prayer. Your ignorance should urge you to begin as the disciples did: "Lord teach us to pray." You must not yield to corruption, temptation, or discouragement, but persevere in prayer with all sincerity and earnestness. If you pray aright, you will be very far from trusting in, or boasting of your prayers; for you will perceive much imperfection and defilement in them. But though humbled on that account, you need not despond; your prayers, though broken, faultering, and feeble, (if you mean what you express, and desire what you ask,) shall meet with acceptance through the intercession of Jesus, and be not only answered but in due season far exceeded. Especially in this way you must seek repentance, as the gift of God through Jesus Christ; using the other means with diligence, earnestness, and perseverance: and then you will assuredly be made partakers of that "repentance, which is unto "salvation not to be repented of."

CONCLUSION.

HAVING thus gone through the subject, according to the method at first laid down, nothing remains but to close with a few practical observations.

I. I would observe from what has been discoursed, that every species of religion, in which repentance forms no prominent part from first to last, is justly to be suspected, yea, certainly to be condemned, as unscriptural and destructive. There is a great deal of this religion in the world, which often comes recommended by extraordinary zeal for some peculiar doctrines of christianity, and is distinguished by unwarranted confidence and high affections. Men, hearing the gospel, are superficially alarmed on account of their sins, and eagerly look out for comfort. Through inexperience they lie open to Satan's artifice, and are easily imposed on with false comfort, deduced from false principles, exactly suited to their carnal unhumbled hearts. Thus they presume that their sins are pardoned, and their state good; and with this presumption self-love is delighted, and high affections produced: these, expressed in earnest fluent language, create them injudicious admirers: this flatters and affects them the more, and confirms them in their confidence; so that they think they must not, on any account doubt

more, after such experiences. Yet all this is only a land-flood, that soon subsides. They gradually experience a decay of affection, and grow lifeless, indolent, and worldly: with their affection their confidence declines, but they struggle hard to exclude doubtings: they call themselves backsliders; allow themselves to have forsaken their first loves and groan out Job's complaint, though not at all in Job's meaning. "O "that it were with me, as in months past." And would a wish suffice, something might be done: but they have no heart for greater exertion. To close all, they abuse the doctrine of final perseverance; take it for granted that they are saints; expect to be restored as it were by miracle, whilst they turn a deaf ear to the voice of Christ, commanding them to "be zealous, "and repent;" till at length, perhaps, a suitable occasion and temptation presenting themselves, they throw aside their profession of godliness.

This is exactly the religion of the stony-ground hearers, who had faith, confidence, and joy, such as they were, but no repentance or humility,* and therefore no root in themselves: for it is only by renewing our hearts unto repentance, that the ground is prepared for the reception of the seed, and the production of true faith and holiness, as hath already been demonstrated.

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* It is very observable how often the words, "Every one "that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth "himself shall be exalted," are repeated by our Saviour; and how many similar expressions are used by his apostles, This infallibly teaches us, that all appearances of religion are fallacious, so long as the heart remains unhumbled.

"Let no man deceive you by vain words." Except you are partakers of repentance, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance, all your religion is vain, your hopes presumptuous, and your destruction inevitable; whatever other attainments, gifts, or experiences you may have to boast of, or to buoy up your confidence. Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, and as effectually ruin souls by false religion, as by open ungodliness; and far more unsuspectedly.

II. I observe from what hath been discoursed that great care is requisite in distinguishing betwixt true repentance, and that which is superficial and merely natural.* This is of vast importance, as numbers of those, who die impenitent, have at times judged themselves, and been thought by others to be penitent. Let it then be remembered, that true repentance, though generally accompanied with terror, tears, confessions,

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* Some will, perhaps, be disposed to enquire, why I have not adopted the common distinction betwixt *legal* and *evangelical* repentance? as the mode of expression is not scriptural, every one is at liberty to use it or not; and it did not appear to me sufficiently exact or comprehensive for my purpose. True repentance has more respect to the law, as transgressed by sin, and justly condemning the sinner, than any false repentance can have. Whilst on the other hand, men are more frequently seduced into a dependence on a superficial repentance, by unwarrantable presumptions of mercy, and false apprehensions of evangelical truth, than by slavish regard to the law. *Natural* and *spiritual* repentance seems to me a preferable distinction. By *natural repentance*, I would understand every sort of repentance, a mere natural man is capable of; by *spiritual repentance*, that which springs from true grace in the heart.

and outward reformation, good words, fair promises, and earnest resolutions, doth not consist in or uniformly attend upon, all or any of them. But true repentance is a change of judgment, inclination, and affection, in respect of sin; immediately accompanied, preceded, or followed by a change of judgment, inclination, and affection, respecting God and his law, Christ and his gospel, ourselves and our conduct, this world and the next. From this change spring, sorrow for sin; self-abasement and condemnation; sole dependence on God's mercy; supreme valuation of Jesus and his salvation; love to God and holiness; tenderness of conscience; zeal for good works; all holy tempers, holy conversation, and holy conduct; accompanied with continual humiliation for remaining imperfections and defilements. Where these effects have been evidently produced, though with little or no terror, no effusions of tears, or seasons of peculiar melting; but gradually and silently; the repentance is yet proved to be sincere and genuine, by this rule,—it leads to Christ and holiness. But all other appearances, whether of terror issuing in self-dependence, and neglect of Christ; or of supposed evangelical humiliation issuing in professed dependence on Christ and free grace, whilst sin is not abhorred and avoided, nor holiness loved and practised, are superficial and hypocritical. Herod might have passed for a true penitent, if John would have allowed him his Herodias: yet John shall loose his head rather than Herod, notwithstanding promising appearances, will part with his beloved lust; and human nature is just the same in other men as it was in Herod. Let no repentance therefore satisfy any man,

which doth not endear Christ and universal holiness; and divorce the heart from every sin, especially that which heretofore was the customary and beloved sin.

III. I would, from what hath been discoursed, take occasion to consider in few words, the nature and necessity of regeneration. No other religion, but that which hath been described, requires that entire change, which this term and a variety of similar expressions in the sacred scriptures imply. A Pharisee's reformation, morality, and outward worship, require no entire inward renovation; and having no experience of it, nor seeing any occasion for it, with Nicodemus he exclaims, "How can these things be?" The evangelical or antinomian self-deceiver also may have his opinions, affections, and confidence, without becoming a new creature; and will, therefore, whilst he uses the terms, mistake their import, and signify by them some of those enthusiastical impulses and revelations which he experiences and boasts of.

But self-admiring, self-justifying man will never exercise that self-loathing and self-condemning repentance which hath been described, except he be born again. Insensible to the attractions of heavenly objects through inordinate love of worldly things, he never will renounce and abhor all sin, mortify every lust, die to all carnal objects, and delight in God and universal holiness, except he be changed into a new creature by the efficacious influences of the Holy Spirit: except "old things pass away, and all things become "new."

This is the new birth so frequently spoken of in the sacred scriptures. A new principle of divine life im-

planted in the heart, purifying the various powers of the soul. Hence proceed and enlightened understanding, a sound judgment in divine things, holy affections, a pure imagination, a sanctified memory, and a well-informed, tender, but not superstitious conscience. Hence proceed new fears, new hopes, new joys, new sorrows, new aversions and desires, new dispositions, and a new life. Yet, as these things are in this life only imperfect in their degree; this imperfection of grace, and remainder of corruption, extort from the true christian bitter complaints; "O wretched man that "I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this "death?" they put vigour into his prayers; "Create in "me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit "within me:" they still find him employment for repentance, and watchfulness; and endear free forgiveness through the blood of Christ.

Sinners should therefore be addressed in terms like these—All your aversion to this thorough repentance, and all your delays about it, only demonstrate your need of being born again. Should God implant in your hearts such a new principle of holiness, as would make you relish and take pleasure in divine things, you will find it natural and easy to abhor sin, mourn over it and forsake it; to repent, and do works meet for repentance. Have you then a real desire after this invaluable gift? If you have not, but prefer the quiet satisfaction of your carnal inclinations, you are justly left without that which you so despise. If you have, "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and you shall "find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. For "every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh

" findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be open-
" ed."

IV. I now take my leave of impenitent sinners with a serious expostulation. I mean such as are living secretly or openly, in covetousness, injustice, lewdness, drunkenness, profaneness, or any known sin; who remember not to hallow the sabbath, to read the scriptures, to worship God, to relieve the poor, or who omit any other known duty; or who proudly trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others, and neglect Christ and his salvation. Oh make no more excuses or delays: " Flee from the wrath to " come." " Evil pursueth sinners:" if it overtake you in impenitency, eternal misery is your dreadful portion. Yet, yet a long suffering God has patience with you: the gospel invites, and Jesus stands with open arms to receive you: complains that you " will not come " to him, that you may have life:" affirms with an oath, that " he hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner;" and, as with tears of compassion, adds, " Turn ye, " turn ye, why will ye die?" Do you then love death? Will ye slight such warnings, such expostulations, such invitations, such compassion? Well, if this prevail not, I must with reluctance leave you, as Paul did the Jews. " Your blood be upon your own head, I " am free."

V. I now turn to thee, poor weeping penitent, who art almost inconsolable, and sinking in despondency. Thou scarcely canst hope that God will pardon so great a sinner; the expectation seems to border on presumption: yet still thy humiliation appears to thyself slight, and thy repentance superficial, and thy

heart insensible: yea, though it is almost melted within thee, it feels like a very stone; and still thou pleadest, "Oh take away the heart of stone, and give "the heart of flesh." Behold, I bring thee glad tidings of great joy; and I shall share thy joy, if I may but be the instrument of administering peace and comfort to thee: "Come unto me," saith Jesus, "all ye "that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you "rest." Behold, he calleth thee: be of good courage. All who will, may come; he hath given thee the willing mind, "and will in no wise cast thee out." He will bind up thy broken heart, and "give thee the "oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise "for the spirit of heaviness." Only wait his time: let him probe thy wounds to the bottom: catch not impatiently at comfort: beg for still deeper humiliation: use every means of increasing thy abhorrence of, and watchfulness against sin; and it shall not be very long before "he will shed abroad his love in thy heart," and cause thee to "abound in hope, through the power "of the Holy Ghost." In the mean time reflect, that whilst thou art mourning on earth, heaven resounds with joyful acclamations and praises on thy account: wait then and pray, and thou shalt, ere long, rejoice and praise too, and that for ever.

VI. But some perhaps will say, I have not this work to do now, I repented many years ago.—What! art thou still a sinner, and hast thou no need to repent! The true christian can indeed thankfully say, my repentance is effectually begun: but only the saint in glory can truly say, my repentance is finished. The more a true believer knows of God and Christ, and

the law and gospel; and the larger his experience is of his own depravity and the Lord's goodness; the more he hates sin, the more he recollects his former sins, the quicker sense he hath of present sinfulness, and the deeper and purer is his repentance. He rejoices in the Lord with penitent joy, and mourns for sin with sweet and joyful mourning. His humility increases his thankfulness and admiration of the love of Christ, and enhances his consolation; for it is a pleasant thing to be thankful. But if the thought that thy sins were pardoned, finished thy repentance, and dried up thy tears, thy repentance needs repenting of, and thou art awfully deceived.

Finally. My fellow christians, let us frequently renew our recollection of former sins, our self-examination, our meditations on those subjects which first excited our abhorrence of iniquity: especially our meditations on a bleeding Saviour. Let us daily renew our acceptance of Christ in all his offices, seeking forgiveness of our daily transgressions through his blood: and exercising ourselves to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and man. Thus, as true penitents, endeavouring to glorify God, adorn the gospel, and serve our generation; we may hope to live in comfort, die in peace, and have "an entrance ministered to us abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

APPENDIX.

CONCERNING HALLOWING THE SABBATH.

THROUGHOUT this Discourse, it hath been supposed, that there is in force a divine mandate of hallowing the sabbath, which all are bound to obey, and contract guilt by neglecting. But the change in the dispensation, since the fourth commandment was given; the alteration of the day, from the seventh to the first of the week; and the manner that alteration was introduced, have afforded some persons an occasion of arguing against the obligation: the judgments of others seem unsettled, and perplexed about it: and those who profane the sabbath, are by these things furnished with some plausible excuse, and preserved from remorse of conscience on that account. For these reasons, I judged it might be useful, to subjoin a few brief hints upon the subject.

I. It should be noticed, that the sabbath was appointed long before the ceremonial law, even from the creation of the world; and therefore cannot, in its own nature, be ceremonial.* That the words of Moses

* Gen. ii. 1—3.

should thus be understood, may be confirmed by the prohibition of gathering manna on the seventh day,* previous to giving any part of the law. The very language of the fourth commandment, " *Remember* the " sabbath day to keep it holy " as well as the reason assigned in the close, evinces the same. And this is corroborated and illustrated by the general custom in many nations through revolving ages, of computing time by weeks, or periodical returns of the seventh day. Of this fact no reason can be assigned so satisfactory, as supposing it to be the effect of an original institution, handed down by tradition, amongst all the descendants of Adam and Noah: which continued even after the appointment that gave rise to it was forgotten.†

II. The observation of the sabbath, being made a part of the Mosaick dispensation, is interwoven with the whole system. It is enjoined in the moral law of the ten commandments, as delivered from Mount Sinai; introduced in the midst of their positive institutions; and enforced by temporal punishments, to be executed by civil authority. This shews its importance; and evinces that it partakes of the excellency of the moral law; forms an eminent part, and is fundamental to the maintenance, of all instituted worship; is typical of and preparatory for the heavenly sabbath; and on every

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* Exod. xvi.

† The pains taken, by express edicts and by a new division of time, in a neighbouring nation, to form an exception to this rule, by men who are avowed enemies to christianity, may help to shew the force of this argument.

account is proper to be enforced by the authority of the magistrate; who may not draw his sword to propagate systems of doctrine or formulas of worship, but may and ought to use his authority to repress immorality and profaneness, and to promote the publick worship of God in the land.—The substance of this commandment is of a moral nature. To separate some known, stated, and periodical portion of our time to religious purposes, when all other engagements being postponed, men should assemble to worship God, and learn his will; is evidently an appointment resulting from the reason and nature of things. The glorious perfections of God; the rational nature of man; our relations and obligations to our Creator, Benefactor, Governor, and Judge; the honour he requires, and we owe him; our relations to each other, as social creatures, who can instruct, assist, affect, and animate one another, by joining together in one common exercise; and our situation in such a world as this; all render such an ordinance indispensable. Repeal this commandment; prohibit this practice: you render publick religion a matter of indifference, or you destroy it. Such a repeal or prohibition implies an absurdity; which cannot be said of the repeal or prohibition of any ceremonial precept. The honour and worship of God, the interests of religion and morality, and the best happiness of mankind, would be inadequately provided for, without such an observance.

III. We cannot indeed, from the reason and nature of things, demonstrate, that exactly one day in seven, and neither more nor less, is required for this moral

duty. But the plain matter of fact, that God hath under every dispensation allotted that proportion invariably, amounts to the fullest demonstration, that infinite Wisdom judged it the best possible. And experience proves, that the conscientious observance of this proportion does not interfere with the advantageous management of either agriculture, manufactures, or commerce; is exceedingly favourable to the cause of liberty and humanity; tends greatly to civilize mankind as social creatures; and fully suffices for maintaining and advancing religion in the world as far as it is generally and strictly observed.

IV. But whether the day to be observed be the first, or the last, or any other of the seven, is evidently in itself indifferent. Only some one day must be pitched upon, either by him that gives, or him that receives the law. Nothing can be more reasonable, than that the Lawgiver should determine this matter, and all his subjects acquiesce. Nothing more desireable than to be, by his determination, delivered from uncertainty and disputation about it. But if he, who instituted one day, afterwards change it for another, his authority demands our submission. He, who from the creation appointed the seventh day in remembrance of its completion, appears to have changed that day for the first, when an event had taken place of still greater consequence to fallen sinners. We now every week commemorate the triumphant resurrection of our divine Redeemer. To avoid needlessly shocking Jewish prejudices, this, (as some other changes,) in the wisdom of God, was effected, silently and gradually, by ex-

ample, not by express precept. As christians, all seem to have observed the first day of the week; the Jewish converts were connived at in observing the seventh also, together with circumcision, and their other ceremonies. Our risen Lord repeatedly met, and spake peace to his disciples, who on the first day of the week were assembled, if not the first time, yet, probably, afterwards by some intimation from him. It appears to have been on the first day of the week, when the disciples being of one accord in one place, the Holy Ghost came visibly and audibly among them. On the first day of the week, they met to break bread, as well as to hear the word preached. On the first day of the week, they were directed to lay by for the poor, as God had prospered them in the preceding week. St. John dignifies this day with the title of "The Lord's Day," which name alone shews in what manner, and to what purposes, it should be observed. The *first* is the only day of the seven mentioned afterwards in the scripture, by way of favourable distinction; sabbaths being spoken of as abrogated ceremonies. And ecclesiastical and civil history, with concurring evidence, represent it as the distinguishing practice of christians, in all ages and nations ever since, to observe this day as sacred to religion.

V. Having determined its obligation, let us briefly consider how it should be hallowed. The Lord of the sabbath hath himself repeatedly allowed of works of necessity and mercy: and in thus relaxing the rigour of the ceremonial part of the commandment, hath enforced the moral part, and implicitly prohibited

all other works. But works of necessity must be so in reality, not in pretence. Settling accounts, writing letters of business or on common subjects, paying labourers, making provision for the indulgence of pride and luxury, with many other things of this kind, which create so much '*necessary*' work for the Lord's Day, are as bad and even worse than keeping open shop, or working at a trade, though less scandalous. No works which are done out of covetousness, pride, or luxury, can consist with hallowing a day to the Lord. Committing known sin is serving Satan, and to employ the Lord's day in Satan's service, proves a man his faithful, willing, and indefatigable servant. Diversions and trifling visits, (and indeed all visits, whose direct object and tendency is not to glorify God and edify one another,) are inconsistent with hallowing the sabbath.—But men have no leisure on other days: that is to say, they have so much to do in the world, and for their bodies, that six days are too little; and so little to do about their souls, and for God, that one day is too much; and therefore they must borrow time from the latter to eke out the former. Idleness is as bad, or worse: for it implies, that we have nothing to do with spiritual things, or with and for God; or nothing worth doing. But indeed we have enough important, profitable, and pleasant work to do on that day. That holy day we ought to honour and delight in, not doing our own pleasure, nor speaking our own words thereon. Extraordinary diligence and earnestness in searching the scriptures; examining our hearts and lives, our state and conduct; meditation and secret devotion; if we have families, instruct-

ing and praying for and with them; and repeatedly attending on publick ordinances, will, even with early rising, require most of this holy day. Edifying conversation, joined with social worship, and acts of charity to the bodies and souls of men, demand all the remainder, that can be spared from unavoidable avocations.—He who values his immortal soul, or has any love to God, desire of his favour, delight in his service, or zeal for his glory, will not complain of being required thus to hallow one day in seven, as if it were a galling yoke; but will complain of himself, if depraved nature seem weary: and he will deem it the best and most pleasant day in the week.

The general profanation of the Lord's day proves the dislike men have for religion, and the contempt they have for the authority and commandment of the Lord. Of those who pay decent respect to the day, multitudes, we allow, are formal hypocrites; and christians indeed serve God every day: but shall we, on such pretences, undervalue this divine appointment? God forbid!—That degree of reverence, small as it is, which is now paid to the christian sabbath, is so far a publick protestation against atheism, infidelity, and profaneness; and a profession of Christ's religion, which puts publick honour upon God and his worship. All business being by appointment suspended; servants, labourers, mechanicks, and tradesmen, that is, the bulk of mankind, have leisure and opportunity to assemble, and hear the word of God; and faith comes by hearing. Multitudes crowd the places where the word of God is preached, and many are converted. True christians being sanctified but in part, lose

much of the vigour of their affections, by their unavoidable intercourse with the world; which decays are repaired, together with an increase of knowledge and grace, by statedly and seriously hallowing the sabbath. Could we but witness the universal hallowing of the sabbath, we might reasonably hope for a proportional increase of real religion.—Were it totally neglected, profaneness, ignorance, and infidelity, we may confidently foretel, *would;* barbarity, tyranny, and slavery, probably *might*, deluge the world. Let impartial judges then determine, from this imperfect sketch, who are the best friends of mankind; they who would tolerate and vindicate the profanation of the Sabbath, or they who would enforce its strict observance.

With great satisfaction, I would add in closing this subject, the words of a celebrated writer, who has, with great effect employed his talents in the cause of practical christianity:*

'Let us appeal' (says he), 'to that day which is 'especially devoted to the offices of religion: do they' (the bulk of nominal christians) 'joyfully avail themselves of this blessed opportunity of withdrawing 'from the business and cares of life, when, without 'being disquieted by any doubt whether they are not 'neglecting the duties of their proper callings, they 'may be allowed to detach their minds from earthly 'things, that by fuller knowledge of heavenly objects, 'and a more habitual acquaintance with them, their 'hope may grow more "full of immortality?" Is the

* See a Practical View of Christianity, by William Wilberforce, Esq. M. P.

'day cheerfully devoted to those holy exercises for 'which it was appointed? Do they indeed "come "into the courts of God with gladness?" and how 'are they employed when not engaged in the pub-'lick services of the day? Are they busied in study-'ing the word of God, in meditating on his perfections, 'in tracing his providential dispensations, in admiring 'his works, in revolving his mercies, (above all, the 'transcendent mercies of redeeming love,) in singing 'his praises "and speaking good of his name?" Do 'their secret retirements witness the earnestness of 'their prayers and the warmth of their thanksgivings, 'their diligence and impartiality in the necessary work 'of self-examination, their mindfulness of the bene-'volent duty of intercession? Is the kind purpose of 'the institution of a Sabbath answered by them, in 'its being made to their servants and dependents a sea-'son of rest and comfort? Does the instruction of their 'families, or of the more poor and ignorant of their 'neighbours, possess its due share of their time? If 'blessed with talents or with affluence, are they sedu-'lously employing a part of this interval of leisure, 'in relieving the indigent, and visiting the sick, and 'comforting the sorrowful, in forming plans for the 'good of their fellow creatures; in considering how 'they may promote the temporal and spiritual bene-'fits of their friends and acquaintance; or if their's 'be a larger sphere, in devising measures whereby, 'through the divine blessing, they may become the 'honoured instruments of the more extended diffu-'sion of religious truth? In the hours of domestick 'or social intercourse, does their conversation mani-

'lest the subject of which their hearts are full? Do their 'language and demeanour shew them to be more than 'commonly gentle, and kind, and friendly, free from 'rough and irritating passions?

'Surely an entire day should not seem long amidst 'these various employments. It might well be deem-'ed a privilege thus to spend it, in the more immediate 'presence of our heavenly Father, in the exercises of 'humble admiration and grateful homage; of the be-'nevolent, and domestick, and social feelings, and of 'all the best affections of our nature, prompted by 'their true motives, conversant about their proper ob-'jects, and directed to their noblest end; all sorrow 'mitigated, all cares suspended, all fears repressed, 'every angry emotion softened, every envious or re-'vengeful or malignant passion expelled; and the bo-'som thus quieted, purified, enlarged, ennobled, par-'taking almost of a measure of the heavenly happiness, 'and become for a while the seat of love, and joy, and 'confidence, and harmony.

'The nature, and uses, and proper employments 'of a Christian Sabbath, have been pointed out more 'particularly, not only because the day will be found 'when thus employed, eminently conducive, through 'the divine blessing, to the maintenance of the religious 'principle in activity and vigour; but also because 'we must all have had occasion often to remark, that 'many persons, of the graver and more decent sort, 'seem not seldom to be nearly destitute of religious 'resources. The Sunday is with them, to say the 'best of it, a *heavy* day, and that larger part of it, 'which is not claimed by the publick offices of the

'church, dully drawls on in comfortless vacuity; or 'without improvement is trifled away in vain and un-'profitable discourse.—Not to speak of those who 'by their more daring profanation of this sacred sea-'son, openly violate the laws and insult the religion 'of their country; how little do many seem to enter 'into the *spirit* of the institution, who are not wholly 'inattentive to its exterior decorums! How glad are 'they to qualify the rigor of their religious labours! 'How hardly do they plead against being compelled 'to devote the *whole* of the day to religion, claiming 'to themselves no small merit for giving up to it a 'part, and purchasing therefore, as they hope, a right 'to spend the remainder more agreeably! How dex-'terously do they avail themselves of any plausible plea 'for introducing some week-day employment into the 'Sunday, whilst they have not the same propensity to 'introduce any of the Sunday's peculiar employment 'into the rest of the week! How often do they find 'excuses for taking journeys, writing letters, balancing 'accounts, or in short doing something, which by a lit-'tle management might probably have been anticipated, 'or which, without any material inconvenience, might 'be postponed. Even business itself is recreation, com-'pared with Religion, and from the drudgery of this 'day of Sacred Rest, they fly for relief to their ordinary 'occupations.

'Others again who would consider business as a 'profanation, and who still hold out against the en-'croachments of the card table, get over much of the 'day, and gladly seek for an innocent resource in the 'social circle, or in family visits, where it is not even

'pretended that the conversation turns on such topics 'as might render it in any way conducive to religious 'instruction or improvement. Their families mean 'while are neglected, their servants robbed of Chris-'tian privileges, and their example quoted by others who 'cannot see that they are themselves less religiously 'employed, while playing an innocent game at cards, 'or relaxing in the concert room.

'But all these several artifices, *whatever they may* 'be, *to unhallow* the Sunday and to change it's cha-'racter, (it might be almost said "to relax it's hor-"rors,") prove but too plainly, however we may be 'glad to take refuge in religion, when driven to it 'by the loss of every other comfort, and to retain as it 'were, a reversionary interest in an asylum which 'may receive us when we are forced from the transi-'tory enjoyments of our present state, that *in itself* it 'wears to us a gloomy and forbidding aspect, and not 'a face of consolation and joy: that the worship of 'God is with us a *constrained* and not a *willing* ser-'vice, which we are glad therefore to abridge, though 'we dare not omit it.'

THE

WARRANT AND NATURE

OF

FAITH IN CHRIST

CONSIDERED,

WITH SOME REFERENCE TO THE VARIOUS CONTROVERSIES ON THAT SUBJECT.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. *Acts* xvi. 31.
Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. 1 *John* v. 1.
I speak as unto wise men; judge ye what I say. 1 *Cor.* x. 15.

THIRD EDITION, CAREFULLY REVISED.

INTRODUCTION.

TO those who are convinced that all men are lost sinners, in absolute need of a Saviour, and that all things are ready in Jesus Christ for the complete salvation of every believer; a more important question can scarcely be proposed, than that which relates to the *warrant* and *nature* of saving faith. At first sight indeed the subject appears very easy: and a reflecting person, conversant with the holy Scriptures, and unacquainted with controversy, will seldom be much perplexed with difficulties respecting it. But men have so bewildered themselves and each other by speculations, and controversies have been so multiplied and managed; that the simple testimony of Scripture is frequently disregarded, or even wrested from its obvious meaning to establish preconceived opinions: while the authority of men is appealed to, in support of evident deviations from the plain meaning of the inspired writers.

These are obvious sources of mistake and perplexity; and another may also be properly noticed. Pious men, who never intended to form a party, have been so grieved by witnessing the fatal effects of prevailing errors, and so haunted with the dread of more extensive mischief; that they have been driven into the op-

posite extreme, as the only effectual remedy. Thus, able and valuable persons, in their zeal for or against certain opinions, write more like *special pleaders*, than calm enquirers after important truth. Their arguments are consequently often inconclusive: their opponents readily discover where they are most vulnerable: and then by acting the same part, they lay themselves open to similar retorts. In the mean while, the minds of numbers are perplexed instead of satisfied: and much disputation about matters stated in Scripture with great simplicity and perspicuity, serves to cherish a sceptical spirit among the more unconcerned witnesses of the contest.

In the early part of the present century, the doctrine of *justification by faith* in the Son of God was comparatively but little attended to in this country: and the honoured instruments, whom God employed to revive a more general knowledge of it, were naturally led to insist on the important subject with peculiar earnestness, and in the most energetick language. Some of them were so fully engaged in active services, as to have little leisure for study; and if they sometimes dropped an expression, in the vehemence of an honest zeal, which was capable of misconstruction; every candid man must acquit them of *intending* any thing unfavourable to practical godliness, which they eminently promoted and exemplified.—But men arose afterwards, who attempted to establish unscriptural *systems* on a few of their detached expressions, and on their fervent addresses to large and affected auditories; or at least to support such systems by their authority: and very respectable persons have been led to

patronize and sanction their mistakes.—Indeed this was no more than re-acting the same scenes, which had been exhibited by the first reformers from popery, and some of their successors; in whose writings, the substance of almost all the controversies of these later years was fully discussed.

While matters were taking this turn in England, some eminent divines in North America,* who had deeply studied these subjects, and had abundant opportunity of observing the practical effects of the different opinions, attempted with great ability to stem the torrent. But in doing this, they seem to have gone rather too far; and to have thrown impediments in the sinner's path, when endeavouring with trembling steps to come unto the gracious Saviour. Perhaps they insist unduly on the necessity of a man's *seeing* the justice of God in his condemnation as a transgressor of the holy law, before he can believe in Christ to salvation; whereas *allowing* it, or *submitting* to it, seems to be all that is absolutely necessary, though not all that is desirable or attainable. In other instances likewise they do not seem sufficiently to distinguish between *seeing* and *believing*.—They appear, to me at least, not to make sufficient allowance for the imbecility of natural capacity in numbers; their want of education, and habits of reasoning; the erroneous and partial instructions afforded them; the effects of custom, prejudices, and associated ideas; and the small degree of life, light, faith, and grace, which may subsist along with a large proportion of error and in-

* President Edwards, Dr. Bellamy, &c.

consistency. They ascribe many things merely to natural principles, excited by the common influences of the Spirit, which the Scriptures seem to mention as the effect of renewing grace. They reject, as wholly *selfish*, such exercises of faith in Christ and cries for mercy, as the word of God in its obvious meaning unreservedly encourages; and sometimes they intimate, that an almost total disregard to our own happiness is essential to true grace. They do not in all instances clearly distinguish that wise and holy *self-love*, which God originally implanted in our nature, to which he renews us by grace, which is the measure of our love to others, and which seeks its happiness in the enjoyment of God alone; from that carnal, apostate, and foolish self-love, which is the consequence of the fall, affects independence on the Creator, and seeks its gratification from the creature.—In short, some of their principles, if carried to their full and legitimate consequences, would condemn many as hypocrites or self deceivers, whom God will own as real though weak believers; and thus "they "quench the smoaking flax, and break the bruised "reed."—Perceiving that "while men slept, an ene- "my had sown tares in the field;" they seem to have been too earnest to root up the tares, and to have forgot that there was danger lest they should root up the wheat also; not duly recollecting, that they cannot be wholly separated in this world, but must be left "to "grow together until the harvest."

On these grounds a general prejudice has prevailed against their writings: and the very important instructions contained in them, which equal, and perhaps ex-

ceed, any thing published in modern times, have been comparatively disregarded: so that few derive from them those advantages, which they are eminently suited to afford; especially to the pastors of the church, in respect of the *essential* difference between genuine experimental religion, and every kind of counterfeit.*— At the same time a controversy has been strenuously maintained in another part of the church, (in its present lamentably divided state,) 'Whether it be the 'duty of sinners to believe in Christ?' 'And whether ministers ought to exhort and invite them to 'believe?' Nor can it be denied that the reasonings of those, who have taken the *negative* side in this dispute, have a very bad tendency. They deter ministers from addressing their hearers in the manner, which the Scriptures most evidently exemplify; they quiet the consciences of the careless and irreligious, as if neglect of Christ and his salvation were their *misfortune* not their *crime;* they advance principles, which render it necessary for men to *know* themselves converted, before they begin to pray for spiritual blessings or to apply for salvation; and thus they perplex the minds of awakened sinners with *doubtful disputations*, till "the devil comes, and takes the seed out of their "hearts, lest they should believe and be saved."

These things being so, we need not greatly wonder if they, who justly consider the gospel 'as glad tidings 'of free salvation to the chief of sinners' take the alarm: and if any of them, in the warmth of their zeal, drop incautious expressions, capable of miscon-

* See that admirable work, Edwards on Religious Affections.

struction, and perversion to bad purposes, it is no more than has generally occurred in similar cases. And should a bystander, who has derived much instruction from the writings of several persons engaged on all sides in these controversies, endeavour, in the spirit of meekness, to state what he considers as the scriptural medium on the controverted points; he surely needs not be apprehensive lest *such men* should say, "Who "made thee a ruler and a judge over us?"

In the quiet recess of his study, the author of these pages has long and seriously examined the subject: and he has carefully noticed in situations favourable to these observations, the effects of the several opinions, on the spirit and conduct of those who maintained them, and on the minds of such as were mere spectators of the contest. And several persons, who have favourably received his other publications, have expressed a wish for his explicit sentiments respecting it. He therefore feels himself in some respects required to give the result of his enquiries, and to assign his reasons for differing in a measure from those, who have written on both sides of the question.—He is well aware, that great candour, caution, and impartiality are requisite so to state his views, as to give no just offence to any party. He has well considered, and may indirectly answer, the principal objections and arguments, which have on all sides been advanced against the doctrine which he maintains: but he purposes to decline all direct controversy.—He means not to support his sentiments by any human authority, (though many of the writers of the last century would fully bear him out, perhaps in every particu-

lar;) but he would singly abide by the testimony of Scripture. The general subject will be divided into two questions, *What is the sinner's warrant for believing in Christ?* And *Is saving faith an holy exercise of the heart, or no?* These two questions are far from coincident; and the want of duly distinguishing them introduces much perplexity into men's reasonings and discourses on the subject.—Many other sources of ambiguity and misapprehension will be adverted to: and *perspicuity* will above all things be consulted; for the author greatly desires to be clearly understood, that the reader may be enabled to perceive whether or not his views be scriptural, and his arguments conclusive,—He needs only add, that he most earnestly recommends to every one, who feels difficulties on the subject, to weigh what is advanced in the spirit of prayer; that the Giver of all wisdom may enlighten his mind, and prepare his heart to receive the truth in love, and to rectify every mistake into which he may have been betrayed, as far as it impedes his comfort, fruitfulness, and usefulness in the world.

PART I.

The Sinner's Warrant for believing in Christ.

SECTION I.

THE SUBJECT OPENED.

THE word *warrant*, though common in the writings of modern divines, is not once found in Scripture, which uniformly represents faith in Christ as the *duty* of all who hear the gospel; and no *warrant* is required for obedience to a plain commandment. As however an inestimable privilege is connected with the performance of this duty; it may properly be enquired what reason a sinner has to expect such a benefit from his offended God? In this sense the *warrant* of faith signifies 'That, which authorizes any person to 'believe in the Lord Jesus; and gives him a ground 'of confidence, that he shall thus obtain eternal salva-'tion.'

But it is necessary to enquire what is meant by *faith in Christ:* as without precision in this particular, the discussion might be involved in great perplexity;

because the terms *faith*, *believing*, and *believing in Christ*, are used in different senses, frequently by the same authors; and still more by those who are engaged on opposite sides.

Faith, in its more general acceptation, is "the belief of the truth;" or 'a cordial consent to the testimony of God in his holy word, with reference to our own concern in it.' *Faith in Christ* implies 'A cordial consent to the testimony of God respecting his Son; connected with a humble and earnest application to the divine Redeemer for salvation; and a willing and unreserved acceptance of him, in his whole character and his several distinct offices, according to the method revealed, and the directions given, in the holy Scriptures.' Not that I would exclude the idea of *reliance*, but I thus state the nature of faith, merely to prevent mistakes in an argumentative discussion. The language of believers, as recorded in the Old Testament, when they speak of "hoping in God," "trusting under the shadow of his wings," or making "his name their strong tower;" and when they call him their Rock, their Refuge, their Habitation, and their Portion, always implies this earnest application to him for protection, salvation, and comfort, and never an *indolent* dependence or expectation. This is evident from other expressions, which they frequently subjoin; such as "I lift up my soul unto thee," "I cry unto thee daily," "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD;" "My soul followeth hard after thee, thy right hand upholdeth me;" "I pour out my soul unto thee:" and many others. The description of faith in Christ, given in this treatise, is not therefore at all

inconsistent with the soul's thus resting itself on God, hanging upon him, and always expecting help from him: and if that idea do not appear sufficiently *prominent;* this arises from the nature of the subject, which relates to one important topick in divinity, and not to every part of a believer's experience.

When the doctrines of the gospel are assented to, and men are convinced by argument that there is no salvation, except by faith in Christ; they may more readily *imagine* that they *rely on him*, or *confide in him* to save them, than that they are *daily and earnestly applying to him for salvation.* I apprehend numbers think that they *rely on Christ*, even while they habitually neglect the means of grace, especially *secret prayer;* or while they attend to it *formally*, as an irksome duty, without importunity, fervency, or entering into the particularities of their case.—But the idea of *believing application to Christ* precludes this way of self-deception, without discouraging any upright enquirer: as it represents sinners by faith seeking help for their souls from an invisible Saviour, according to their feeling sense of sin and misery; as the blind and lame, the lepers and paralyticks, did for their bodies, when he was visibly present on earth.—As an instance how much the idea of *reliance*, considered as an adequate definition of faith in Christ, may be abused, the author once heard a poor prostitute, *when avowedly determined on pursuing her infamous course of life*, ward off the conviction that she was in the road to eternal destruction, by expressing a firm reliance on God's mercy, and on the love of Christ who shed his blood to save poor sinners!

Having premised these particulars concerning the general nature of faith, I would observe, that if any persons mean by *faith in Christ*, 'a confident persuasion, that Christ died for them in particular, that 'they are in a justified state, and shall certainly inherit 'everlasting life;' it is not only granted, but strenuously maintained, that no man is warranted thus to believe concerning himself, except as he has clear proof that he is "in Christ a new creature," and "has crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts:" for this, and vastly more to the same purpose, is constantly spoken of in the Scriptures concerning all true christians without exception. Properly speaking, this confident persuasion of a personal interest in Christ, if well grounded, is *hope*, or *the full assurance of hope;* and is opposed to *presumption*, or a groundless confidence of salvation: nor can it be obtained or preserved except by walking in all the commandments and ordinances of God with persevering diligence.—Again if faith in Christ be considered as a reliance on him for salvation *from future punishment*, without heartily seeking to him for deliverance from *sin* and from this present evil world, or falling in with the whole design of his coming in the flesh; no man is or can be warranted *thus* to believe on him: for this is a mere selfish desire and presumptuous confidence of escaping misery and obtaining happiness, without the least real understanding of the nature, or value for the blessings, of that holy salvation which the Scriptures propose to us. For in fact, it is nothing better than the cry of the evil spirits, when they besought Christ not to torment

them; except as these too well knew God's purposes to expect final impunity.

A few other remarks may tend to elucidate the subject. We are told that "Faith is the evidence of things "not seen," as it credits the whole of God's sure testimony, concerning things invisible and future: and "the substance of things hoped for," as it realizes the substantial and eternal blessings which are brought to light by the gospel. It is not then a *new faculty* of the soul: but the exercise of our original faculties in a manner *new* to us as sinners. To believe testimony, to rely on promises, and to expect the performance of them from the faithfulness of him who made them, are as *natural* to us as any other act of the rational soul: and indeed almost all the business of life is conducted by this very principle: but the things, which the Lord testifies, proposes, and promises, are so foreign to our apprehensions, so contrary to our prejudices, so humiliating to our pride, so disquieting to our consciences, and so opposite to our carnal passions and pursuits; that we have no disposition cordially and obediently to believe them, till a change has taken place in our hearts. When, however, a man is properly disposed to believe divine truth in general; he will be led to consider and credit the testimony of God concerning his Son, and to believe in Christ for salvation. But this faith must imply some perception and understanding of the nature of salvation, some conviction that we need it, and some desire after it: unless it can be supposed that a man seeks an object, of which he knows nothing, of which he feels no want, and about which he has not the least concern! It must also imply

a *virtual* renouncing of all other confidences to depend on Christ alone, a willingness to use the appointed means, and a disposition rather to part with every thing, than fall short of an interest in him. For "the "kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a "field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, "and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, "and buyeth that field. Again the kingdom of heaven "is like unto a merchant-man, seeking goodly pearls; "who, when he had found one pearl of great price, "went and sold all that he had and bought it."* This language of our Lord is so decided; and the difference between him "who went away sorrowful, because he "had great possessions," and those "who left all and "followed him," is so strongly marked, that we cannot on scriptural grounds allow that any man truly believes, if he is determined in his heart rather to renounce Christ, than part with some wordly object. It may indeed be urged, that these things are the *effects* of faith, and not implied in its *nature:* but assuredly the least exercise of true faith in Christ constitutes a man his disciple; yet he expressly says, "Whosoever he "be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he *can-* "*not be my disciple.*"† If therefore these are effects of faith, they spring immediately and invariably from its essential nature.—Awakened sinners often hesitate long, before they can be induced thus unreservedly to renounce all selfish confidences and wordly idols, for the sake of Christ and his salvation: some shrinking back on one account, and some on another, as carnal

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* Mat. xiii. 44—46. † Luke xiv. 25—33.

lusts, self-wise or self-righteous pride, fear of man, or other corrupt propensities preponderate. Even they, who really believe the testimony of God, and are convinced that the gospel is true, are frequently seduced into very criminal delays, before they decidedly "count all things but loss that they may win Christ." But every genuine exercise of faith implies these things: though in many cases, they are only discernible, as the members of the body in the half-formed embrio, or the parts of the oak in the germ of the acorn.

Faith in Christ is therefore, the sinner's believing obedient application to the Saviour: reliance on him, and his power, truth, and love; on what he did and suffered on earth, and is now doing in heaven; and on his promises, and covenant-engagements, for complete and everlasting salvation: cordial acceptance of him, according to the word of God, in all his characters and offices: and confidential entrusting the immortal soul with all its eternal interests into his hands, from a feeling sense that he needs this salvation; a perception in some degree of its suitableness and value, an approbation and desire of it above all things, and a dread of coming short of it more than any other evil.

Such is the idea of *faith in Christ* adhered to throughout this work: and they, who have formed other notions concerning *faith*, will of course object to many things contained in it. This should therefore in the first place be considered with peculiar attention; and some deliberate judgment formed on the general nature of faith in Christ, whether this be or be not a scriptural account of it: otherwise the truth of the propositions, and the conclusiveness of the arguments,

contained in the subsequent pages, will not be clearly perceived; and the objections, which arise in the reader's mind, may probably result from an unobserved difference of sentiment on the subject before us. Let this then be well weighed, and impartially compared with the sacred Scriptures.

These things being premised, it is here maintained, *That the sinner wants no warrant of any kind for believing in Christ, except the word of God.* No qualifications, (or qualities, endowments, or dispositions in himself,) are at all requisite to authorize his application, or encourage his hope of success; unless any one should choose, with manifest impropriety, to call his willingness to be saved in the Lord's way, *a qualification.* "Him that cometh to Christ, he will *in no* "*wise* cast out:" and they, who do not come when they hear the gospel, have as good a *warrant* as they that do; but they will not avail themselves of it, because they comparatively despise the proffered benefit. —I shall first establish the position by scriptural proofs; and then assign some reasons for insisting on it.

SECTION II.

Scriptural proofs, that the sinner wants no warrant for believing in Christ, except the word of God.

FIRST then, The commission and instructions which our Lord gave to his apsotles, compared with their conduct and that of their fellow labourers, are conclusive on the subject. "Go ye into all the world, and "preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth "and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth "not shall be damned."* Nothing can be more evident, than that every human being, however vile, is warranted to believe in Christ, by this declaration of the gospel itself; and that nothing is or can be wanting, but a *disposition* to accept of the proposed salvation. The other instructions given to the apostles were, beyond all doubt, coincident with this commission; though on several accounts they were worded rather differently:† but one direction, couched under a parable, particularly suits our purpose. "Go ye into the "highways and hedges, and *compel* them to come in, "that my house may be filled."‡ Now what further

* Mark xvi. 15, 16. † Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. Luke xxiv. 47.
‡ Luke xiv. 23.

warrant could a poor traveller or beggar stand in need of, who was desirous of admission to a feast; after the servants had been sent with express orders, to use the most urgent invitations, persuasions, intreaties, and assurances of a hearty welcome, in order to induce him to compliance?

The conduct of the apostles and evangelists shew how they understood their instructions. They always called on their hearers, without exception or limitation, to believe in Christ: knowing that all, who became willing, by the power of the Holy Spirit accompanying the word, would be thus encouraged without delay to embrace the gracious invitation, and that the rest would be left without excuse. Thus Peter speaks of his ministry, "God made choice among us, that the "gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the "gospel and believe."* Nothing else, except *the word of the gospel*, was required to warrant the faith of the gentiles.

Paul addressing the Jews at Antioch in Pisidia, said, "Be it known to you men and brethren, that "through this man is preached unto you the forgive- "ness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified "from all things.—Beware, therefore, lest that come "upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets, Be- "hold ye despisers, and wonder and perish."† He was sensible, that there were *despisers* in the company, whom he warned of the consequences of unbelief: yet he preached forgiveness of sins and justification by faith

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* Acts xv. 7—9. † Acts xiii. 38—41.

to all present, without exception; which he would not have done, if the gospel had not been a sufficient warrant to authorize every one of them to believe in Christ for salvation.

The same apostle calls his office, "The ministry "of reconciliation;" and says, "Now then we are "ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech "you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye re-"conciled to God."* If one, who till then had been an enemy of God and Christ, had asked the apostle, how he might be reconciled? would he not have answered, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ;" for "God hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no "sin, that we might be made the righteousness of "God in him?"

II. The invitations of Scripture evidently prove the point in question. The Lord, by his prophet, calls on those, who are spending "their money for that "which is not bread, and their labour for that which "satisfieth not, to come to him for all the blessings of "his everlasting covenant."† Such as seek happiness in wordly vanities, or aim to please God by empty forms and superstitions, or go about to establish their own righteousness, are alike described in the very terms of the invitation; nor are the most stupid worshippers of idols, or the vilest workers of iniquity, excluded.—"On the great day of the feast, Jesus stood, "and cried, if any man thirst, let him come to me and

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* 2 Cor. v. 18—20. † Isa. lv. 1—3.

" drink."* No one in that large company, who thirsted for salvation, or for happiness, was excluded by the terms of this proclamation.—But, lest any should suppose, that this only warrants the faith of such as are conscious that they thirst in a *spiritual manner;* he afterwards, appearing in a vision to his servant John, explains his meaning more fully; " Let him " that is athirst come, and *whosoever will*, let him " take the water of life freely."† This is surely a sufficient *warrant* for every one that is *willing;* and, however unencumbered or universal the invitation may be, none but the *willing* can be expected to comply with it. But while the gospel is preached men *become willing*, who were not so before: nay a desire to be made willing may very properly be formed into a prayer; and then it falls under the general assurance, " Ask, and it shall be given you;—for every one that " asketh receiveth."

Wisdom calls to the sons of men, and thus expostulates with them; " How long ye simple ones will ye " love simplicity, and the scorners delight in their " scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn ye at " my reproof: I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I " will make known my words unto you." Can any further warrant for faith in Christ, and for applying to him for his complete salvation, be required for the most careless, scornful, or profligate sinner on earth; whenever he comes with a sincere and willing mind!

In the parable of the marriage-supper, many, by *the king's express command*, were urgently and repeatedly

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* John vii. 37. † Rev. xxii. 17.

invited, who in the event never tasted of the feast. These were excluded merely because they *would* not come, but *made light* of the invitation, and went to their farms and merchandize. And whatever we understand by the wedding-garment, it must be considered as supplied by him who made the feast: for the servants were sent " into the highways, and as many " as they could find" they were ordered " to bid to " the marriage;" but how should poor beggars, or even travellers, be provided, on such an unexpected occasion, with raiment suited to a royal feast? The discovery therefore of the man, " who had not on the wed- " ding garment," represents the case of those professed christians, whose faith is dead and whose confidence is groundless; and consequently it has nothing to do with the *warrant* for a sinner to believe in Christ.*

" God so loved the world, that he gave his only " begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, " should not perish, but have everlasting life." But if the word of the gospel were not a sufficient warrant; a man might truly believe in Christ, and yet perish for want of such a warrant.—Christ said to the woman of Samaria, who was at that time living in habitual gross wickedness, " If thou knewest the gift of God, and " who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou " wouldest have asked, and he would have given thee " living water." The *asking*, here mentioned, could be no other than a believing application to Christ for

* Matt. xxii. 1—14.

salvation: and a knowledge of Him, and of the mercy and grace of God in him, would have influenced the woman to make this application, for which she had already a sufficient *warrant*. Afterwards we are informed, that "many of the Samaritans believed on "him, for the saying of the woman;"—"and many "more believed because of his own word:"* so that they, who before "knew not what they worshipped," wanted no other *warrant* for faith in Christ, except his word, or even the words of others concerning him.

Our Lord's address to the lukewarm self-sufficient Laodiceans shall close this argument. "Because thou "sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and "have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and "naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the "fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, "that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of "thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes "with eye-salve, that thou mayest see."† Was not this *counsel* a sufficient *warrant* to any Laodicean, whatever his previous character had been, to apply to Christ for these blessings, as soon as he felt the least degree of desire to obtain them? Yet the word *buy* intimates, that none would thus apply, but those, who renounced false confidences and wordly idols for the sake of him and his salvation.

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* John iv. 10, 39—42. † Rev. iii. 17, 18.

III. Faith in Christ is an act of obedience to the command of God; and unbelief is the most ruinous and the most provoking of sins. When the Father, in a voice from heaven, proclaimed, "This is my be- "loved Son, in whom I am well pleased, *hear ye* "*him*,"* it may perhaps be argued, that he only required the three apostles then present to hear, believe, and obey their Lord: but Peter addressed the unbelieving Jews in the very same manner, by applying to them the words of Moses; "A Prophet shall the "Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, "like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things what- "soever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to "pass, that every soul, which will not hear that pro- "phet, shall be destroyed."† Now, can it be imagined, that the Jews were commanded to *hear* Christ, and yet not commanded to *believe in him?* or would such a *hearing* without *believing* have preserved them from the threatened destruction?—"This is his com- "mandment, that we should believe in the name of "his Son Jesus Christ."‡ but it would be a very extraordinary commandment, if none were required to obey it, except such as had already obeyed it!

The obedience of faith implies obedience *in believing*, as well as that obedience which springs from faith. Thus the apostle says, "Ye have *obeyed from* "*the heart* the form of doctrine delivered unto you." —"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you,

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* Matt. xvii. 5. † Acts iii. 22, 23. vii. 37. ‡ 1 John iii. 23.

" that ye should not *obey the truth.*" " They have " not all *obeyed the gospel:* for Esaias saith, Lord, " who hath believed our report? So then faith comes " by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* Now what can we infer from such language of the Holy Spirit, but that " God, who commandeth all " men every where to repent," commandeth likewise all men every where to believe in his Son? We must conclude from it, that believing in Christ is an act of obedience to a divine command; though it does not justify the sinner as obedience, but as interesting him in the divine righteousness of the Saviour: yea, that *believing* is the principal part of the obedience which God by the gospel requires of sinners; the first command given to condemned transgressors of his holy law, as placed under a dispensation of mercy; the most explicit token they can give of a disposition to submit to him, and return to a state of subjection to his authority. But if this be indeed the truth; no man can want any other *warrant* for faith in Christ, than the commandment itself which enjoins it.

The point will, however, be more fully established, by considering the language of the Scriptures concerning *unbelief.* " He, that believeth not God, hath " made him a liar; because he believeth not the record, " that God gave of his Son." " He that believeth not " is condemned already; because he hath not believed " in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And " this is the condemnation, that light is come into the

* Rom. vi. 17. x. 13—17. Gal. iii. 1.

" world, and men loved darkness rather than light, " *because their deeds were evil.* For every one that do- " eth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, " lest his deeds should be reproved."* It is not only certain *in fact*, that " he who believeth not shall be " damned:" but *unbelief* is the special ground of his condemnation; because *it springs from hatred of the truth of God, through determined love of sin.* This our Lord elsewhere illustrates. Having said to the Jews, " Ye will not come to me, that ye might have " life:" he adds, " How can ye believe, who receive " honour one of another; and seek not the honour " that cometh from God only?"† Disregard to God, and inordinate love of worldly honour, were the reasons, why these men did not, and could not, believe in Christ.—" Why do ye not understand my speech? " Even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of " your father the devil, and the works of your father " ye will do. He was a murderer;—he is a liar and " the father of it: and because I tell you the truth, ye " believe me not."‡ A disposition like that of the devil, rendered the persons in question incapable of believing Christ's words, or of coming to him for salvation.—" When He" (the Comforter) " is come, he " shall convince the world of sin;—because they be- " lieve not in me." The sin of disbelieving and crucifying the Messiah seems to have been immediately presented to the consciences of the Jews, on the day of Pentecost, when they were so pricked in their

* 1 John v. 10—12. John iii. 18—20. † John v. 39—47.
‡ John viii. 43—47.

hearts, as to cry out, " Men and brethren, what shall we do?" And indeed, according to the degree of previous information, or means of instruction, convinced sinners are almost always peculiarly distressed in conscience, by recollecting their former proud and carnal neglect and contempt of the gospel. Nay they frequently imagine it to be even the *unpardonable sin:* and this sometimes opens the way to powerful and durable temptations to despair, of which, several instances have fallen under the writer's observation. The criminality of unbelief is indeed a species of guilt, of which the world at large has no conception, and which never troubles the consciences of mere moralists or formal Pharisees: but what real christian can deny, that rejection of Christ implies a high degree of enmity against God and his authority and glory; a contempt of his wisdom as foolishness, of his infinite mercy as needless, or of his authenticated truth as falsehood? The unbeliever says in his heart unto God, " Depart " from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways:" or, " I shall have peace, in the way of my own " heart," though I reject the way of peace revealed in the gospel.

St. Paul mentions some, " that are contentious " and will not obey the truth, but obey unrighteous- " ness;" and of men, " to whom God sends strong " delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all " might be damned, who *believed not the truth, but* " *had pleasure in unrighteousness.*" So that the love of sin, and taking pleasure in it, effectually prevent men from " receiving the love of the truth that they " might be saved:" and this throws light upon another most alarming declaration of the apostle, " The

" Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven,—taking " vengeance on them that know not God, and *obey* " *not the gospel*,—who shall be punished with ever- " lasting destruction."*

" Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you " *an evil heart of unbelief*, in departing from the liv- " ing God." " To-day, if you will hear his voice " *harden not your hearts*." " Ye do always err *in* " *your hearts*." It is therefore evident, that the Scriptures represent unbelief and rejection of Christ, as springing from the corrupt state of the *heart*. " How " then shall we escape, if we neglect so great salva- " tion?" " See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. " For if they escaped not, who refused him that spake " on earth; much more shall not we escape, if we turn " away from him that speaketh from heaven."† We should therefore consider *unbelief*, not merely as an occasional circumstance in the sinner's condemnation, in that it leaves him without remedy under the curse of the law: but as the direct cause of his condemnation; the most provoking disobedience to God's express command, connected with a contemptuous refusal of his unspeakable mercy, resulting from reigning pride, rooted enmity, and determined love of sin in one form or other.

But if this be the case, it must certainly be the duty of all, who hear or may hear the gospel, to believe in Christ: and then it must follow, that no man wants

* Rom. ii. 8. 2 Thess. i. 7—10. ii. 10—12.

† Heb. ii. 3. iii. xii. 25.

any *warrant* for his faith, except the Lord's own word; his testimony, invitation, and command, and his promise "*in no wise* to cast out any one who comes to "him."

It may be useful to illustrate this important subject, by an apposite similitude. Suppose a physician should give the most publick notice that he will bestow advice, medicines, and every other requisite, on all the sick persons in a certain district, who come and put themselves under his care. This notice would be a sufficient *warrant;* and no sick person, within that district, could want any other for applying to the physician, and expecting him to do all in his power for his recovery.—But some might deem themselves so little indisposed as not to need assistance; and others, being wealthy or proud, might distain a gratuitous cure. Some might be too busy or slothful, or self-indulgent, to pay due regard to their health; while others would place no confidence in the physician's skill, or the sincerity of his proposal. Nay, it is possible, there might be persons, who pretended to expect a cure from him, while they neglected to take his medicines or follow his directions.—Certainly none of these would derive any benefit from him: yet this would not arise from the want of a further *warrant;* but from their not considering his publick notice, as "a faithful saying, and "worthy of their acceptation." He who felt himself diseased, who desired a cure, confided in the physician's skill and faithfulness, and applied to him and observed his directions, might reasonably expect a cure. But should any man, professing to regard the publick notice, as a sufficient *warrant* to rely on the

physician for the recovery of his health, confidently imagine himself well, or in the way to be cured, though he never had consulted him; he would be thought insane or delirious. Should another apply, and yet refuse to follow the prescriptions and directions given him; he would be deemed insincere, or trifling with his own health and life: and, if he *seriously* expected a cure in this way, he too must be deemed a madman. Should a third contend, that he ought not apply to the physician, till he had made himself better, and a more proper and deserving object of his attention; every one would perceive the absurdity of his conduct. Finally, should any one imagine that he *was recovered;* while his languor, want of appetite, inability for work, and other symptoms, proved him to be as diseased as ever; it must be concluded, either that he had not applied to the physician, or not taken his medicines; or that the physician could not or would not do any thing effectual in his case.—The reader requires no help, in accommodating the circumstances of this illustration: in natural things men exercise common sense; while too many speculate on religious subjects, in a manner which contradicts its most obvious suggestions.

The same things are implied in a general invitation to a feast; which is the illustration repeatedly employed by the Holy Spirit. Without an appetite, a relish for the provisions, and some confidence in him who gives us the invitation, men will make light of it: yet they who go their way, have the same *warrant* to come to the feast, as those who actually partake of it.

The sincere beggar feels his poverty, desires relief, submits to the humiliating circumstances of his condition, and supplicates his more affluent neighbour in the best manner he can: yet these are not his *warrant* for applying and expecting help; but he takes his encouragement from the wealth or bounty of him, of whom he solicits relief; and if he has bidden him come, and promised in that case to help him, this constitutes his *warrant* for coming.

All the Jews had the same *warrant* to return and rebuild Jerusalem, after Cyrus had issued his proclamation: but their settlements at Babylon, or in other places, with the perils and hardships of the attempt, would have overcome their almost expiring attachment to the holy city; if the Lord had not "stirred up the "spirit" of some among them.*—The rest had the same *warrant* but not the same *willingness*, to return: and this illustration is peculiarly apposite; because the reluctancy of the Jews arose from unbelief, and the carnal state of their hearts; and their disregard to this typical redemption aptly represents the sin and folly of those, who neglect the great salvation of the gospel.

A willingness to be saved from eternal misery, and to be made eternally happy, according to men's several notions of happiness, is natural to all: but a desire of that *holy felicity* proposed in Scripture, and of that *humbling salvation from merited wrath and from all sin* which the gospel proclaims, is widely different. Yet no willingness to be saved, which leaves

* Ezra i. 1—5.

a man wholly unwilling to be saved in the way, and with the salvation, of the gospel, can be of any use or value. The want of this willingness is the sole reason of the sinner's unbelief and destruction. They, who perish from under the means of grace, have the same warrant to believe in Christ, as they who are saved: but the gospel is to most men "a price put "into the hands of a fool to get wisdom, while he has "*no heart* to it."

The brazen serpent, lifted up in the centre of Israel's camp, with the publick declaration of its use, was a sufficient *warrant* to every man, when bitten by a fiery serpent, to look unto it. But if any were so deprived of sensation as not to *feel* the fatal bite, or so stupid as not to fear approaching death; if any foolishly preferred other methods of seeking a cure, or were so proud, rebellious, and unbelieving, as to shut their eyes, or look another way; or if any looked without at all expecting a cure according to the word of the Lord, they must have perished; not for want of a *warrant* to believe; but because they did not submit to the wisdom and authority of God, or rely on his faithfulness and mercy, in this appointed way of preservation.—Every man of reflection will see, how these things apply to the case before us: and it is obvious thence to infer, that all sinners, to whom the gospel is sent, have an equal *warrant* to believe in Christ, and to expect salvation from him, according to the holy Scriptures; and that men perish for want of a disposition of heart to comply with the invitations of mercy, and to submit to the authority and commandment of God our Saviour.

SECTION III.

Some reasons for insisting on this position,—'That the Word of God is the sinner's only and sufficient warrant for believing in Christ.'

AS a *disposition* to believe is equally necessary to salvation, with a *warrant* to believe; it may perhaps be thought, by some readers, that it is not very important to insist, so fully and strenuously upon this point: for after all, the *warrant* will be of no use to those, who have no heart to avail themselves of it. In considering this part of our subject, it may be observed:

I. That it is extremely futile to *suppose* the case of a man *believing without a disposition to believe;* and then gravely to make provision for it!—Whatever warrant or encouragement may be given unless we leave matters unexplained or mis-stated, so that men think they believe when they do not, the *indisposed* will utterly disregard our words. To lay the blame therefore on the want of a *disposition* to believe, can discourage none but such as are consciously *unwilling;* and these certainly are not entitled to encouragement: but if the sinner had no *warrant* to believe,

those would be discouraged who were most earnestly desirous of salvation; while the proud and careless would be furnished with an excuse for their unbelief.

Should we even say, 'A sincere willingness to be 'saved in the Lord's way is the sinner's *warrant* to 'believe in Christ; and without this it is presumption 'to apply to him;' the consequence would be, that a newly awakened person, defective in knowledge and judgment, destitute of experience, and agitated by tumultous fears and conflicting passions, must solve to himself various difficult questions, concerning the *nature of a sincere willingness*, and the *necessary measure* of it, before he could think himself *allowed* to come to the Saviour. Whereas, if the nature of *salvation* and of *faith* is clearly explained; and all men without exception are invited, exhorted, besought, and commanded in the name and by the authority of God, to believe in his only begotten Son: the *willing* come without hesitation; others feel their reluctancy to be criminal, perilous, and fatal if not overcome; convictions are frequently excited, and prayers for a willing mind presented; and God blesses his own word to break the stout heart, and bind up the broken heart, while the obstinate are left without excuse.

It is a fact, capable of the fullest proof, that in those places, where nice speculations on these subjects are avoided, men find scarcely any difficulty respecting them: but when deeply impressed with a sense of guilt and danger, and earnestly desirous of the salvation of the gospel; they apply to Christ for it, as the sick do for admission into an hospital. They seldom are troubled about a *warrant* to believe, though

finding much difficulty in *actually believing*, they are led to pray with him of old, "Lord, I believe, help "thou mine unbelief;" and are often distressed with anxious fears, lest they should not believe aright, or with a true and living faith. The language of their hearts seems to be this; 'Every sinner, however vile, is invited and commanded to believe in Christ, and to come to him for salvation: therefore I may and ought to come. I now feel very desirous of these blessings, which heretofore I despised, and would gladly embrace the gracious invitation. Lord, help me to believe, and teach me to come aright; for I dread nothing so much as coming short of thy salvation!' Nay, those very persons, who, previous to deep convictions, have systematically perplexed their minds with nice distinctions and doubtful disputations, are often constrained, by urgent fears and desires, to act in direct opposition to their former scheme, and to apply to Christ in the manner above described!

If any thing be considered as a *warrant* for a sinner to believe in Christ, except the word of the gospel, it must be something of an *holy* nature: so that if his convictions and desires be not *holy* he is not *warranted* to believe.—But this would fully justify that total unbelief, which the Scriptures decidedly condemn: for certainly a man *ought not* to do what he is *not warranted* to do. It likewise sets a newly awakened person to resolve one of the most difficult questions in divinity. For he must so accurately understand the nature of true holiness, as to be able, in his own concern, under great discomposure of mind, to distinguish the *minutest portion* of it from all coun-

terfeits; and clearly to ascertain its actual existence in his heart, amidst all the immense alloy of selfish and sinful passions! It would probably be found impossible for the ablest theologian in Christendom *certainly* to determine such a question, in respect of many peculiar exercises of his own mind: how then can it be expected; that *embrio* converts, so to speak, should be able, during an overwhelming tempest, to make such accurate observations, and nice distinctions?—The general proposal of the truth, and the scriptural exhortation and assurance, "Believe on the Lord Je-"sus Christ and thou shalt be saved," exactly suit the case of such persons; while the event will shew the nature of their convictions. Whatever better informed and more experienced persons may determine concerning the nature of saving faith, whether it be or be not an holy exercise of the heart; the convinced sinner can decide nothing of the kind in respect of his own experiences: nor can others determine the question for him; since many are alarmed, and convinced, and as far as we can see, *appear* even to be humbled, who never believe to the saving of the soul.

Two very small seeds may be essentially distinct in *species*, yet the best eyes, assisted by the finest glasses can scarcely know one from the other: how then could a person, with very weak eyes and with a very dim light, certainly distinguish between them? But when they are sown, and grow up, the plants that spring from them will be easily and infallibly distinguishable. Thus it is with men's convictions: some are *essentially* different from others; but all our endeavours *exactly* to know such as are *spiritual* from such as are merely *natural*, except by the event,

will answer little purpose. We must judge as well as we can, and act accordingly: but we shall frequently find ourselves mistaken. How impossible then must it be, for the alarmed enquirer after salvation to find *a warrant* from any holiness in himself, to encourage his application to Christ? And how wise and gracious the general language of Scripture; "Let "him that is athirst come, and whosoever will let him "take of the water of life freely!"—While we proceed on the scriptural plan, the Lord will distinguish what we cannot. They that thirst for the pure "water of "life,—proceeding out of the throne of God and of the "Lamb," will be encouraged to approach and take of it freely; and others will either go back into the ways of open ungodliness, or be found among the stony-ground hearers, resting in a false peace, without sanc-"tification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprink-"ling of the blood of Jesus."

When the subject is considered in an *abstract manner*, the difference between a *warrant to believe*, and a *disposition to believe*, may at first glance appear trivial; but, viewed in its relation to experience and practice, it is immensely great and important.—It can never discourage a trembling sinner, who honestly enquires, "What he must do to be saved;" to describe the nature of faith, and explain the way of salvation; and then to invite, exhort, and persuade him to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, not doubting but in so doing he will certainly be saved. But should we enter into a discussion concerning the nature of genuine convictions, gracious thirstings, and spiritual desires; maintaining that it would be unwarranted pre-

sumption for him to believe, unless conscious that his experiences were of this nature; we should exceedingly embarrass his mind; take off his thoughts from the love of Christ, and the freeness and sufficiency of his mercy and grace; and give Satan an opportunity of tempting him to despondency, or of otherwise "taking "the seed out of his heart, lest he should believe and "be saved." Indeed, most deviations from scriptural simplicity may be traced back to this *abstract* way of discussing doctrines: and the subjects, which chiefly perplex speculating men, and furnish the most materials for controversy, appear very easy and plain, when applied to practical purposes, according to the state of mind, which they were intended to meet. So that the wisdom and goodness of God, in not arranging revealed truths according to the supposed exactness and consistency of human systems, are most illustriously displayed, when these truths are applied to the several cases to which they are suited, for conviction, instruction, warning, encouragement, or exhortation.

Whatever be the nature of divine illumination; or whatever may have been a man's previous thoughts about it; he cannot in general, when first divinely illuminated, very readily perceive any *holiness* in the change of which he is conscious. He now discovers, as it were *intuitively*, that he is a guilty polluted creature; that his supposed virtues were specious vices, and his religious duties formal, selfish, and hypocritical; and that his heart is deceitful and desperately wicked: and in proportion to the degree of his illumination, is his conviction of these humiliating truths.—These recent discoveries, (or these new *perceptions*

of what perhaps he before assented to as a *notion*,) occupy his thoughts: he can hardly conceive, that the hearts and lives of other men are so bad as his own; still less can he think that real and eminent saints feel those evils of which he is conscious; nay, he can scarcely be convinced, that his own heart was formerly so sinful as he now finds it to be. "Without the law "sin was dead:" and the spirituality of the precept not only detects, but irritates, the depravity of nature, excites all manner of concupiscence, and sometimes even stirs up the dormant enmity of the heart into direct exercises of opposition to the holy character and righteous government of God. This is also connected with a discovery of the hatefulness of sin, and a disposition to abhor it in all its forms; so that *self-loathing* becomes a predominant part of the new convert's experience. *The stone is become flesh;* and exquisite sensibility, in feeling and hating every sinful emotion, is united to a quickness of discernment in discovering sin where not before suspected; and its odious nature and numerous aggravations, which before were excused and palliated.—Every thing, therefore, concurs to discourage, as well as to *humble*, a person in this situation; except the glad tidings of the blessed gospel: and should a self-complacent thought intrude itself, while he reflected on these new and more just views of his own character, he woud reject it with alarm and detestation.

Thus at the very time, when the sinner is made completely willing to welcome Christ and his whole salvation; so far from perceiving *any warrant in his own holy dispositions*, to authorize his believing appli-

cation to the Saviour and reliance on him, he commonly thinks himself worse than ever, and viler than any other sinner; and is often tempted to conclude that he has sinned beyond the reach of mercy, and that Christ will except him from the general rule of "casting out none that come to him."—what then can meet this case, but the scriptural assurances, "Ask "and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find; "knock and it shall be opened to you: for every one "that asketh receiveth?"—And what can be more improper than to embarrass him with nice distinctions; in direct opposition to the apostolical direction, "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to "doubtful disputations?"—In proportion as the gospel is understood, it gives encouragement, and suggests pleas, to that man who is most vile in his own estimation. He cannot indeed say, "God I thank "thee, I am not as other men:" but he may "smite "on his breast, and say, God, be merciful to me a "sinner." "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon "mine iniquity; for it is great." "I do not present "my supplications before thee for my own righteousness, but for thy great mercies." The infinite and everlasting mercy of God; the all-sufficient merits, atonement, and intercession of the incarnate Son: the unencumbered invitations of the gospel, and its exhortations and injunctions, with the promises connected with them, fully warrant the vilest sinner that ever lived, to apply for salvation without delay, and without any reason to fear a repulse. For they, who have committed the unpardonable sin, "cannot be renewed

" to repentance," and will never thus come to Christ for his humbling holy salvation.

Trembling and almost desponding sinners seldom consider their convictions, as the effect of a supernatural influence: nor indeed do they in general reflect at all on the *cause* or *nature* of the change of which they are conscious. And when they have leisure from the tumult of their thoughts, to make enquiries of this kind; they commonly ascribe the whole to *means* and *instruments;* and frequently imagine, that if others had heard the same sermon, or read the same book, they must have been equally convinced. And having a far worse opinion of themselves, it is very difficult to make them sensible, even by the clearest evidence, that their temper of mind is really better in the sight of God, than it was before. It must therefore be impossible, for a sinner, in this condition, to find a *warrant* for his faith, in those feelings of his own mind, which constitute a *disposition* to believe. Nor has he the least occasion for it; as the word of the gospel gives him a sufficient *warrant* and a most abundant encouragement " to come to Christ that he may have " life."

II. Even such persons, as have been long accustomed " to live by faith in the Son of God," who have frequently known " peace and joy in believing, " and have abounded in hope by the power of the " Holy Ghost," are sometimes overcome by temptation, or called to pass through sharp conflicts, and great darkness and distress of soul. In these circumstances, they are often led to question, whether all their past experiences have not been a delusion;

whether they were ever "called with an *holy* calling;" whether they ever truly loved the Lord or not. Should they then keep away from the throne of grace, and stand at an awful distance, from the compassionate Physician of their souls, till they have determined these questions? Alas, they can determine nothing in this dark and doleful state! Every thing in themselves appears polluted and vile: the recollection of their past profession, advantages, and comforts, aggravates their distress, and adds weight to the burden of their guilt, so that they are often tempted to draw the most desperate conclusions concerning their state, and the Lord's intentions respecting them. But in this manner they commonly begin to emerge from their distress. 'If all,' say they, '*has* hitherto been self-deception, still the Lord is infinitely merciful; all things are ready; the invitations except none; and the Saviour says, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast "out." Encouraged by such thoughts. "Out of "the depths they cry earnestly unto the Lord:" they confess their guilt with all its aggravating circumstances, and plead his merciful forgiveness, and his plenteous redemption.* "Out of the belly of hell, they "look towards his holy temple," and seek his gracious deliverance;† and while they beseech the Lord to glorify his infinite mercy in saving them, the vilest of sinners; he "brings them out of the horrible pit, and "out of the miry clay; he sets their feet upon a rock "and orders their goings; and he puts a new song

* Ps. cxxx. Jonah ii.

" into their mouths, even thanksgivings unto their " God" and Saviour. Then indeed a brighter light shining upon their experiences, they can discern some actings of holy fear, humility, desire, faith, hope, and love, amidst the perplexities of their souls; yet they could ascertain nothing of this kind in the time of distress and dismay, when they stood most in need of encouragement.

III. But indeed the believer, who is best established in judgment and experience, and most assured in hope, does not consider his consciousness of sanctifying grace, or his upright walk and conversation, as in any sense his *warrant* for faith in Christ, or in applying to him and relying on him, for renewed pardon, and fresh supplies of wisdom, strength, grace, and consolation answerable to his daily needs. He may, and will, on some occasions, appeal to the Lord for his integrity: and as " his own heart does not con- " demn him," of hypocrisy, or allowed sin, " he has " that confidence towards God," which he could not otherwise enjoy.* He will consider his conscious love to Christ and christians, his hatred of sin, and his delight in God's commandments, as a full proof that his faith is *living*, and his salvation sure: he may plead these things; as a reason why the Lord should defend him against the tongue of slander, maintain his cause against those that injure him, and prosper his endeavours to do good: and in various ways he may " rejoice in the testimony of his conscience, that in

* 1 John iii. 19—22.

"simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wis-
"dom; but by the grace of God, he has had his con-
"versation in the world." This is evident from num-
berless passages in the sacred Scriptures; and even from the prayers of the most eminent saints. But so long as a man needs forgiveness, and blessings innumerable and inestimable, which he hath not in the smallest degree *merited* by his best services; and so long as he is continually making unsuitable returns for former mercies: he cannot, properly speaking, have any *warrant for his faith*, except the word of the gospel; however his *hope* may be encouraged and assured by the seal and witness of the sanctifying Spirit. Nor will the poor publican's prayer be ever laid aside, as unsuitable to his case, by the greatest saint on this side the perfection of heaven; though self-deceivers, of various descriptions, may think themselves too *holy* to employ such self-abasing language.

It is commonly urged on this subject, that if any thing be considered as the *warant* of faith, except the word of the gospel, boasting will be introduced, and self-confidence encouraged. This is true in general, and the sentiment has a powerful tendency that way: yet many, who are charged with *representing holy dispositions as a necessary warrant to faith in Christ*, look on those dispositions to be as entirely a free gift of the Saviour, as any of the blessings they afterwards receive: and (whether consistently or not I pretend not to determine,) they enter as fully as their opponents into the spirit of the apostle's words, "By "grace ye are saved, through faith; and that not of your-"selves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man

" should boast: for we are his workmanship, created in " Christ Jesus unto good works."—" Who made thee " to differ from another?" or what hast " thou that thou " hast not received?"—" Being justified freely by his " grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Je- " sus." The fact seems to be this: Some pious men, in guarding against abuses, have unwarily thrown impediments in the way of discouraged souls: others by attachment to system have moreover furnished excuses to proud and prejudiced unbelievers; and many have expressed themselves in a manner, which may be perverted to encourage a degree and kind of self-preference, inconsistent with the pure gospel of Christ. On the other hand, some have incautiously used language on the subject, which may be understood to render even the preaching of regeneration, sanctification, and holiness of life, dangerous; by representing all holy dispositions and good works, as tending to boasting and self-confidence: and the charge of giving countenance to self-righteousness, has been so indiscriminately advanced, as to involve many persons and opinions, that by no means deserve it. But if we adhere simply to the word of God, we shall keep at a distance from these extremes: and none will pervert our doctrine, except those " who stumble at the word, " being disobedient," and who " wrest the Scriptures " to their own destruction."

PART II.

Saving Faith in Christ essentially holy in its Nature.

SECTION I.

THE TERMS DEFINED AND EXPLAINED.

THE *holy* nature of saving faith, at least in its first exercises has been expressly denied by several persons, who have maintained the doctrine insisted on in the preceding pages; and others have used language capable of this construction.

That we may the better understand the subsequent arguments, we should previously obtain precise ideas of the meaning in which the words *holy*, *holiness*, *sanctifying*, and *sanctification* are here used. *Holy* or *holiness* is opposed to *unholy* or *unholiness;* and not to *unrighteous* or *unrighteousness.* An *unrighteous man*, in the language of argumentative theology, signifies a man under condemnation for his sins, and not brought into a state of justification: an *unholy man* is one unrenewed by the Spirit of God, and under the dominion of sin. *Holy* and *holiness* therefore relate to

the dispositions and affections of his heart, and not to his state as justified before God: nor is this distinction of trivial consequence, but essential to a clear understanding of the subject.

The question, therefore, concerning the holy nature of saving faith, has nothing to do with the doctrine of justification, but belongs entirely to another *topick* in theology. We are "justified freely by the grace of "God," or by *free mercy*, entirely contrary to our deservings: we are justified by the righteousness and atoning blood of Christ, as the meritorious ground of our pardon and title to eternal life: and we are justified by faith alone; because faith alone constitutes our relation to Christ, that we may be "made the righteous-"ness of God in him." According to the holy and good law of our righteous Sovereign, and the covenant of works, the least imperfection or failure in obedience condemns us; all the holiness which we can ever possess, with all the obedience we have performed, weighs not an atom in the opposite scale; and to the last moment of life we need free forgivness of every defect, to whatever degree of sanctification we have attained, or how many good works soever we have done. "Cursed is every one who continueth not in "all things written in the book of the law to do them." —Not only the new convert, or the feeble believer is excluded from taking any encouragement from his *incipient* sanctification, if he be capable of ascertaining its existence; but the most advanced christian, after half a century spent in holy obedience, and zealous endeavours to glorify the Saviour and serve his generation; comparing himself and his best duties with the

perfect standard must exclaim, "I am all as an un-
"clean thing, and all my righteousnesses are as filthy
"rags." Even *perfect* holiness of heart, and obedience in conduct, could do nothing towards atoning for past sins, or redeeming the forfeited inheritance: and if Paul's justification at the tribunal of Christ, depended, as its meritorious ground, on the last expression of his love and zeal, when he was expiring as a martyr, he must be condemned by the holy law of God. From first to last we must be justified by mere mercy and grace, through the righteousness and atoning blood of Emmanuel, and by faith alone: nor can *sanctification*, whether more or less advanced, avail any thing towards *justification*. If this was well considered and fully understood, many plausible objections to the *holy nature of saving faith*, which suppose that it interferes with the doctrines of imputed righteousness and free justification, must fall to the ground, and would require no further answer.

"Now to him that worketh not, but believeth in
"him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is accoun-
"ted for righteousness." These words of the apostle have been greatly misunderstood, for it may as fairly be inferred from them, that believers never work at all, for any purpose, or from any motive; as that they are *in all senses absolutely ungodly*, when God justifieth them.—The sinner, when he believes in Christ, "labours for the meat which endureth unto everlasting
"life, which the Son of man shall give him:" he
"works out his own salvation with fear and trembling:"
he "gives diligence to make his calling and election
"sure;" he is "zealous of good works," "fruitful in

"all the works of righteousness, which are through "Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God;" yea "always abounding in the work of the Lord." But, notwithstanding this, he not only ceases to work, *in respect of justification*, when he first applies for an interest in the righteousness of Christ; but, amidst all his "diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the "end," to glorify God, and to do good to mankind; he never *works at all*, at least *allowedly*, in dependence on his own doings, or in order to add them to "the "righteousness of God by faith."

In like manner he is *ungodly*, in himself, according to the law, by his own sincere confession, and in the unerring judgment of God; not only at the moment when he is first justified, but during the whole period that he lives by faith in Christ for justification.—His *incipient and imperfect godliness* is not at all noticed in this respect: yet his coming to Christ with earnest desires of salvation, and his humble, obedient, and willing return to God through him, essentially distinguish his character from that of such persons, as "say "unto God, Depart from us, we desire not the "knowledge of thy ways;" and that of all others, who are in every respect absolutely *ungodly*, and have "no "fear of God before their eyes."

Whatever in any degree accords to the law of God is so far *holy:* but an *external* or *relative* holiness falls not under our present enquiry. The moral law is *spiritual*, and takes cognizance of men's *spirits:* whatever therefore, in the state of our hearts, answers to the spirituality of the precept is *holy*. The least intermixture of *unholiness*, in the best and most spiritual exercises

of the heart, or actions of the life, condemns us according to the legal covenant: but the actual existence of the smallest portion of a right and spiritual disposition, if it could be ascertained, would prove the possessor *regenerate;* being one of the "things which accom-"pany salvation." Abraham might justly have been condemned, and needed merciful forgiveness for the weakness and wavering of that very faith by which he was justified: while the small measure of obedience, which Sarah rendered, in reverencing her husband; though she laughed in unbelief, denied her crime, and was sharply rebuked for it, is noticed with approbation by Peter, as a specimen of the "manner, in "which *holy* women who trusted in God adorned "themselves."* So entirely distinct are the questions concerning holiness, and concerning the way of justification; except as the sanctification of the Spirit *evidences* our interest in Christ by faith.

The case of Abraham, to which the apostle refers in the words before cited, is peculiarly unfavourable to the conclusions which many deduce from them. For that patriarch had walked with God for many years before the transaction, concerning which the sacred historian records, that "He believed in God, "and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Yet on this passage the apostle grounds his remark, "Now to him who worketh not, but believeth in him "that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is accounted to "him for righteousness." But will any man maintain,

* 1 Pet. iii. 5, 6.

that Abraham had been, even to that time, in all respects ungodly, and an enemy to God? And that he had never performed one good work in all the preceding years of his walking with God? Yet this must be the consequence of the absolute interpretation of this remarkable text. The same might also be shewn respecting David, at the time when he composed the thirty second Psalm; to which the apostle referred as another illustration of his subject.

Every degree of humility, fear of God, desire of happiness in his favour and service, love to his perfections and those things which he approves, hatred of what he abhors and forbids; simple belief of his testimony, reliance on his promises, and regard to his authority and glory, if *genuine*, accords to the spiritual precept of the law, and is so far *holy*. A transgressor, if renewed to *a right spirit*, and encouraged to hope for mercy, would plead guilty, apply for pardon, and approve of the most humbling and self-denying way of reconciliation, which the glory of his offended God required.

Sanctifying and *sanctification*, as these words relate to our present subject, denote the *renewal of an unholy creature to a right spirit:* and are applicable to every stage of this renovation, from its commencement in regeneration, to its completion in glory.—But no measure of sanctification can possibly form any part of a *sinner's* justifying righteousness: because while it is imperfect, that imperfection needs forgiveness; and when perfected, it can make no atonement for past sins, nor can it merit eternal life.—It however, distinguishes a *living faith* from that which is *dead*

and worthless; it forms our meetness for heaven; it enables us to glorify and prepares us to rejoice in God; and it is a distinct part of our free salvation, no less valuable than justification itself;—as distinct as a gratuitous cure of the jail-fever would be from the pardon of a felony, and the grant of an inheritance. If then the opinion, that saving faith is *holy*, even in its first and feeble actings, could countenance self-righteous confidence; more complete sanctification must have proportionably a still stronger tendency to it. Yet this is not supposed by the persons in question: for they see, that *justification* and *sanctification*, in the *advanced* christian, are perfectly distinct: how is it then, they do not recollect, that they are distinct at the first, as well as at the last? Or if they allow it, how can they but perceive that their objections in this respect are perfectly unfounded?

SECTION II.

Saving Faith the effect of Regeneration.

THE holy nature of saving faith may be inferred from the consideration, that it is the gift of God, and wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit. To this it may indeed be objected, that many gifts are conferred by the same divine Agent, which are allowed to have nothing essentially *holy* in their nature. It should, however, be observed, that in those things which inseparably accompany salvation, the Holy Spirit directly acts upon the dispositions and affections of the heart, stamps his own image, and communicates his own holy nature to the soul, by permanently operating on all its faculties, as an in-dwelling source of life, light, purity, and felicity; whereas in imparting spiritual gifts, or miraculous powers, he only works upon natural principles, or enables a man *occasionally* to perform supernatural actions, without any abiding union or assimilation. Balaam, Judas, and many who in Christ's name prophecied, cast out devils, and wrought miracles, continued *all the while* covetous, ambitious, malignant, or sensual workers of iniquity: but no man ever truly believed in Christ, while his heart continued the willing slave of any lust.—As

these gifts and powers are not holy in their nature, or even in their effects; so neither are they connected with salvation, by any indissoluble bond: but faith in Christ is more explicitly and frequently in Scripture connected with eternal salvation, than any other exercise of the heart or soul whatever. If it therefore be not *holy* in its own nature; it is an exception to the general rule: for no other fruit, or gift, or operation, of the Holy Spirit, that invariably accompanies salvation, can be mentioned, which is not indisputably holy in its essential nature.

As unbelief springs from the "love, of darkness "rather than light;" because the deeds of the unbeliever are evil: so *faith* must arise from the love of light rather than darkness, because of an incipient disposition to keep God's commandments. "He that "doeth truth cometh to the light, that his *deeds* may "be made manifest that they are wrought in God." When *the evil heart of unbelief* is removed, and the sinner has "received the love of the truth;" then "with the heart he believeth unto righteousness." But in proportion as the doctrines of the gospel are proposed to the minds of proud and carnal men, with convincing energy; they excite the greater measure of scorn, rage, and enmity. The overbearing evidence, with which the hated light is poured in upon the reluctant understanding, disturbs the conscience, affronts the self-complacency of the heart, and calls forth into vigorous opposition those evil propensities which before lay dormant. This was the effect of our Lord's discourses and those of his apostles, on the unbelieving priests, scribes, and Pharisees. Undenia-

ble miracles, unanswerable arguments, decisive scriptural proofs, pointed warnings and rebukes, and the clear light of divine truth, connected with the meekness of wisdom and holy love, served but to excite the more determined resistance from their ambition, avarice, envy, and resentment: and when they were completely baffled, and could say nothing against either the miracles or the doctrine, they were enraged even to madness.

When a *partial* view of divine truth gains the assent of the understanding, without a disposition of heart congenial to the grand scope of christianity; such professors are formed, as our Lord describes under the similitude of the stony-ground: and their fallacious confidence, selfish joy, and temporary faith, while "they have no root in themselves, but in time of "temptation fall away," are exemplified by facts on every side.—The seed too sown on thorny ground represents another very common way, in which a carnal heart "holds the truth in unrighteousness," by a dead faith, an unwarrantable confidence, and an awful mistake as to the tendency and design of revealed truth: but *an honest and good heart* is the only *good ground*, in which *the word of the kingdom* will so "take root, and spring up, as to bring forth fruit with "patience."

It is really surprising, that, with such Scriptures before them, serious and reflecting persons should speak of faith in Christ, as a 'mere act of the under-'standing, produced by a common illumination total-'ly distinct from regeneration!' I would ask those who use such language whether this be not precisely

the definition of a *dead* faith? and whether any man be capable of giving a better? For is it not an assent of the understanding to the doctrines of the gospel *as true*, without any consent of the heart to them *as good and holy?* It is by no means intended, that all, who inadvertently seem to favour this sentiment, really countenance a dead faith; for many parts of their writings have a contrary tendency: but it shews how readily even *good men*, when contending for a system, may be seduced to sanction opinions which entirely suit the purposes of very *bad men*.

In forming our judgment on this subject, let us next consider the following words of our blessed Saviour, "No man can come unto me, except the Father "which hath sent me, draw him:"—"It is written "in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God." "Every man therefore, that hath heard and learned "of the Father, cometh unto me.—Therefore said I "unto you, no man can come unto me except it were "given him of my Father."* *Coming to Christ* is the same as *believing in him*, at least as far as the present argument is concerned: and has this *gift* of the Father, this *drawing*, *teaching*, *hearing*, and *learning*, nothing *holy* in its nature? Surely, upon second thoughts, every serious mind will adopt the apostle's words, "Do not err, my beloved brethren; every "good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and "cometh down from the father of lights, with whom "is no variableness neither shadow of turning:" es-

* John vi. 44, 45, 65.

pecially as the same apostle afterwards carefully distinguishes the wisdom which is from above, by its *holy* and *sanctifying* nature, from that wisdom, which is "earthly, sensual, and devilish;" as well as a *living* from a *dead* faith, by the holy obedience that accompanies it.*

But our divine Instructor has not left us to form our own conclusions from this general language: for he hath shewn us in what manner the Father teaches and draws the sinner to come to him.—"When the "Comforter is come, he shall convince the world of "sin, of righteousness, and of judgment."—"He "shall lead you into all truth."—"He shall glorify "me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it "unto you."† Under the illumination and convincing influences of the holy Spirit, sinners become acquainted with their own true character and real situation: and thus the discovery of their guilt, pollution, danger, and helpless misery in themselves, prepares them for perceiving the nature and value of the salvation of Christ. Then he becomes glorious in their eyes, and precious to their hearts: they consider him as the Pearl of great price, yea of inestimable value. "What "things were gain to them, they now count to be "loss for Christ." The fear of being rejected by him overpowers all other fears, and is frequently the source of permanent anxiety. The desire of his salvation, and of the felicity which they conceive his people to enjoy, overcomes their love of worldly objects. They

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* James i. 16, 17. ii. 14—26. iii. 13—18. † John xvi. 8, 14.

are thus prepared to forsake all for Christ: and no important secular interest, no beloved relative, no not even life itself, is so precious in their deliberate practical judgment, as the loving Saviour of lost sinners. In proportion as the Holy Spirit presents the things which pertain to him and his salvation, before one, who is thus taught of God, and drawn by the Father, all these affections are uniformly excited and invigorated: yet the very same things, when plainly set before the proud and carnal minds of unregenerate sinners, awaken contempt, enmity, and blasphemous rage. And is not that influence, which produces so entire a revolution in the judgment and affections of those who experience it, of an *holy* nature? No doubt, while the truth is made to shine before the sinner's *understanding*, his heart also is prepared to love and welcome it.

This was exemplified on the day of Pentecost; when the Spirit was poured from on high, not only on the apostles, but likewise on the multitude. The very persons, whom Peter most justly charged with having wickedly crucified the promised Messiah, being "pricked in their heart, said, Men and brethren, what "shall we do?" And being instructed and exhorted by the apostle, "they *gladly received the word*, and were "baptized in the name of Jesus." They were convinced of their exceedingly aggravated guilt in crucifying the Lord of glory; and not merely alarmed by the dread of punishment; they "repented and did "works meet for repentance:" Christ was glorified in their hearts, and they believed in him as their Lord and Saviour.—But there were others who were *cut to*

the heart by similar addresses of the apostles: yet, not being humbly sensible of their guilt and danger, they were only the more enraged by their convictions.—When Stephen disputed with the Jews, not being "able to resist the spirit and wisdom with which he "spake," they had recourse to persecution: nay, when his persecutors could neither answer his arguments, nor endure his expostulations, they "gnashed "upon him with their teeth, stopped their ears," and stoned him without delay. Now who can doubt, but that they who *gladly received the word*, had experienced a gracious change of heart by the power of the Holy Spirit: while the others, though surrounded with light and tortured with convictions, were left to the natural enmity of their proud and carnal minds?*

Let us consider another example of the effects produced by these influences. The jailor at Philippi had cruelly abused Paul and Silas, and had exceeded his commission by thrusting them into the inner prison, and making their feet fast in the stocks; (for he might have *kept them safely* without this severity:) and he had afterwards attempted to murder himself. But he was at length convinced, by means of what he heard and saw, that, "these were the servants of the most "high God, who shewed to men the way of salvation." Under this conviction, "he called for a light, and "sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down "before Paul and Silas:" and *in the first instance*, before he proposed to them his interesting enquiry, "he "brought them out of the stocks," and the inner

* Acts ii. 37, 38, iii. 12—26. iv. 1—4. v. 33. vi. 10, 11. vii. 54—59.

prison, into some convenient place. The event proved, that his convictions were produced by the agency of the Holy Spirit: and the jailor's conduct manifested, that he was not merely *terrified*, but also *humbled* and sorry for his sins: and especially that he heartily repented of the cruel usage, which the prisoners had received from him, as he made them all the amends of which the circumstances would then admit. —This done, "he cried out, Sirs, what must I do "to be saved?" and they answered, "believe in the Lord "Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." And when they had further instructed him and his family in the nature of Christianity, he embraced that despised and persecuted religion, professed his faith by receiving baptism, ventured all consequences in thus joining himself to the hated sect of the christians, shewed every kindness to Paul and Silas, and was filled with "peace and joy in believing."—This is a fair specimen of the *nature* and tendency of those convictions, by which sinners are brought to *believe in Christ.* The jailor's faith was evidently connected with repentance, of which he shewed some tokens and produced some fruits, before he understood the plan of salvation revealed in the gospel, and when he had merely a general belief that he might be forgiven and saved. The further and more explicit exercise of faith, when it was fixed on Christ the Saviour; worked by love of him and his servants; overcame the love of the world and the fear of the cross; and purified his heart from the pride, enmity, and selfishness, which before had reigned there without controul.

But let us contrast this example, with that of Fe-

lix, a sinner of high rank, before whom Paul, again a prisoner, "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, "and judgment to come." For he also *trembled:* but the love of sin caused him to hate the light; and he sent the ambassador of heaven, to the authority of whose message his conscience bore painful testimony, back to the dungeon, saying, "Go thy way at this time, "when I have a convenient season, I will call for "thee. He hoped also that money should have been "given him of Paul, that he might loose him: where-"fore he sent for him the oftener, and communed "with him.—But *after two years*, Portius Festus "came in Felix' room, and Felix, willing to shew the "Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound."—It does not appear, that before the memorable night of his conversion, the jailor was at all better disposed to christianity than Felix: they both were *convinced* and *trembled:* but the former was made partaker of *an honest and good heart* by new-creating grace, and the good seed of the word took root, sprang up, and brought forth fruit; while the latter continued carnal, covetous, sensual, and at enmity with God, notwithstanding his transient alarm, when the word of truth was sounding in his ears.*

This may be further illustrated by the case of king Agrippa, who listened to the apostle Paul's inimitable defence, and was "almost persuaded to be a chris-"tian:" his understanding assented to the truth, and his conscience was on the part of the christian Teacher: but his heart remained under the power of worldly

* Acts xvi. 23—34. xxiv. 24—27.

principles; and he still neglected Christ and his salvation. But we are told the "Lord *opened the heart* of "Lydia, that she attended to the things which were "spoken of Paul." Now who can doubt, but that there was an essential difference between *the heart* which the Lord opened, and that which sin and Satan closed?*

Thus the apostle informs us that the "veil still re-"maineth *on the heart*" of the unbelieving Jews;† and for almost eighteen hundred years they have despised, abhorred, and blasphemed the Messiah, to whom their Scriptures so fully bear testimony, and whom their fathers crucified. Yet the Lord hath declared, "I will pour upon them the Spirit of grace "and supplication, and they shall look *to me*, whom "they have pierced, and mourn."‡ Then the veil will be taken from their hearts, and they will become penitent believers in the crucified Emmanuel: and who can suppose that this change wrought by the Spirit of grace, by which they are brought to believe in Christ, is any other than regeneration?

Again the apostle, having shewn the nature of his ministry, and his manner of fulfilling it, adds these remarkable words, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid "unto them that are lost; in whom the God of this "world hath blinded the minds of them that believe "not; lest *the light of the gospel of the glory of* "*Christ*,—should shine into them." And on the other hand, he states that where the gospel is truly believed, "God who commanded the light to shine

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* Acts xvi. 14. xxvi. 28. † 2 Cor. iii. 15. ‡ Zech. xii. 10.

" out of darkness, hath shined into *the heart*, to give " the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in " the face of Jesus Christ."* Hence it is most manifest that the illumination, which is the immediate *cause of saving faith in Christ*, particularly respects the *heart*, and prepares it for welcoming those discoveries of the divine glory in the person and salvation of Christ, which the proud and carnal heart despises and hates; and which Satan especially hides from those who continue in unbelief. And surely this difference implies, that the one is an holy and the other an unholy state of the affections; the one being regenerate, the other not.

The same is manifestly implied in our Lord's words, " Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born " again; he cannot *see* the kingdom of God."—" Except he be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot " enter into the kingdom of God."—" That which is " born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of " the Spirit is Spirit."† Can any man savingly believe in Christ, before he is able in the least degree to perceive the nature of the kingdom of God? And is it not *by faith in Christ* that the sinner enters into that kingdom?‡

St. Paul affirms that " The natural man receiv- " eth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are " foolishness to him, neither can he know them; be- " cause they are spiritually discerned."§ The contrast between the *natural man* and the *spiritual man*,

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* 2 Cor. iv. † John iii. 1—8.
‡ Col. i. 13, 14. § 1 Cor. ii. 14.

and indeed the whole context, fully proves, that he spoke of an unregenerate person, one in a state of nature, born of the flesh, and not of the Spirit: and would we know what " things of the Spirit of God are foolishness" to such persons; another text from the same epistle informs us; " The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness."* Now can he, to whom the doctrine of a crucified Saviour is foolishness, and who cannot receive or know this doctrine and other truths connected with it, for want of spiritual discernment, be at the same time a true believer in Christ? or does the apostle mean that this is the case with only some of the unregenerate?

The language of St. John is equally decisive on this subject. " As many as received him, to them gave " he power to become the sons of God, even to them " that believe in his name; which *were*—born of " God."†—The concluding words of this passage evidently point out the source of that difference, which subsisted between the believing and the unbelieving Jews. The former being *born of God*, received Christ by faith, and were by *adoption* admitted into the family of God, and to all the privileges of his children: the latter notwithstanding their descent from Abraham, continuing unregenerate, rejected the promised Saviour, and were not owned as the children of God.—I am aware, that this text is confidently brought forward in proof, that *faith precedes regeneration;* and in that case it would stand single in Scripture: but a careful consideration of the passage and context is

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* 1 Cor. i. 18. † John i. 11—13.

sufficient to evince, that this was by no means the evangelist's design.—Christ came to the Jewish nation as his own professing people, and they received him not: but a remnant received him, and where admitted to the privileges of the children of God. This remnant were not distinguished from others, by their descent from the patriarchs, by a more docile and tractable natural disposition, or by the inclination of parents, teachers, or others, respecting them; but by a supernatural influence: they were born not of blood, " nor of the " will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." —So that *regeneration* was the immediate cause of their receiving Christ, and believing in his name; and *adoption* into the family of God with all its privileges was the effect. And this accords with the language of the same apostle in another place, " Whosoever be- " lieveth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."— His faith is the *effect* and evidence of his regeneration, and not the *cause* of it. This is generally allowed to be the order of construction, where he says, " Every " one that *loveth* is born of God;" and " Every one " that *doeth righteousness* is born of God." And by what rule of interpretation do we reverse it when speaking of *faith?*

He that is *dead in sin* can only have a *dead faith*, and perform *dead works:* for *living faith* can only be predicated of a *living subject*. How then can the dead faith of an unregenerate sinner be the instrumental cause of divine life?—But it may be readily understood, that, when the word of truth appears with convincing evidence to the natural understanding, and with alarming energy to the conscience; one man may be

left under the power of carnal enmity to resist the light, or to flee from it; while the heart of another, under the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, may be subdued, softened, humbled, and disposed to receive the truth in faith and love.—Men who are dead in sin may acquire much doctrinal knowledge, and have a natural conviction that the gospel is true; though their whole religion be a notion and form, with a few transient emotions and affections: but, sometimes even while at a distance from instruction, when in urgent danger, or deep affliction, "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" takes possession of their souls. Then the truths, before coldly assented to, are recollected and believed in a more cordial manner, and living faith begins to produce all its genuine effects. This change of heart, I apprehend, is called in scripture, being *born again, born of the Spirit, born of God, begotten of God;* it is *regeneration,* the beginning of sanctification: and the *life* thus communicated, is not merely light in the understanding, but spiritual perception and sensibility in the judgment and conscience, submission in the will, and holy love in the affections, though in a small and feeble measure. "As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."

The language used concerning those who believed the gospel, confirms this conclusion. Thus when Apollos visited Corinth, he "helped them much, who "had believed *through grace.*" The word *grace* may mean, either *the special sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit,* or *unmerited mercy;* and the former seems here to be meant; but if the latter signification be insisted on, St. Paul expounds the passage when

he says, "God who is rich in mercy, for his great "love wherewith he loved us, even when we were "dead in sins, hath quickened us together with "Christ;—by *grace* ye are saved."* "For we our-"selves also were sometime foolish, disobedient, de-"ceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in "malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. "But after that the kindness and love of God our "Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of "righteousness which we have done, but according "to his mercy *he saved us by the washing of regene-"ration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost*, which he "shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our "Saviour; *that being justified by his grace*, we should "be made heirs according to the hope of eternal "life."† Now it is evident beyond dispute, that in the judgment of the apostle, as here stated, the first effect of the Lord's special love to those who are dead in sin and slaves to divers lusts, consists in quickening and regenerating them; and they are *regenerated*, that they may be *justified*, by being made capable of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In like manner, when the gospel was preached at Antioch, "the hand of the Lord was with them," (both the teachers and their auditories,) "and a great "number believed, and turned to the Lord."‡ By the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit the dead in sin were made alive to God, and in consequence, they believed and turned to the Lord as his worshippers

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* Eph. ii. 4, 5. † Tit. iii. 3—7. ‡ Acts xi. 21.

and servants.—Here the distinction between *regeneration* and *conversion*, though often treated as *scholastick* and *subtile*, ought to be noted. We are *passive* in receiving divine life, though it *may be* communicated while we are using the appointed means, or bestowing much diligence from natural principles: but we are *active*, in turning to the Lord by true repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. The former is *regeneration*, the latter *conversion:* and it has principally arisen from the disregard of this obvious, and I must add important, distinction, (*important* to accurate views and just reasoning in controverted subjects,) that many have spoken of *regeneration* as the *effect* instead of the *immediate cause* of faith: for it cannot be denied that conversion, the soul's active turning itself to the Lord, is always the *effect* of faith, in some of its exercises, and generally of explicit faith in Christ; but then regeneration precedes both faith and conversion, as the cause and source of them; in the same manner that life precedes all kinds of vital motion.

" I have planted," (says the apostle,) " and Apol-" los watered: but God gave the increase." Surely this proves that no wisdom of words or excellence of speech; no full and faithful declaration of the truth; no clear explanations, conclusive arguments, or apt illustrations; no eloquent addresses to the passions, or solemn appeals to the conscience; no alluring representation of the Saviour's compassion and love; no urgent persuasions or alarming expostulations; no power of truth forcing itself upon the understanding; no undeniable miracles wrought before men's eyes, or even on their persons; no, not even the gift of mira-

cles itself, can prevail with an *unregenerate* sinner to welcome the humbling holy salvation of the gospel. His carnal mind will, after all, be "enmity against "God:" and as it is not, and cannot be subject to the law; so it will certainly either reject or pervert the gospel, which was expressly intended to "magnify the "law and make it honourable." "Do we then make "void the law through faith? God forbid; yea we es- "tablish the law." A dead faith, a presumptuous confidence, selfish affections, and formal worship and obedience, is the sum total, which can be produced without regeneration.

"God commended his love to us, in that while we "were yet sinners Christ died for us."—"God was "in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." Thus the way of reconciliation was opened. He sent his ambassadors of peace, and by them besought us to be reconciled to God: and thus the way of reconciliation was made manifest. He regenerates our souls; and then we repent, believe, are justified and reconciled, and become the friends of God: and we may adopt these words: "If when we were enemies, we "were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; "much more being reconciled we shall be saved by "his life."* "You, who were *some time*, alienated, "and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet "*now* hath he reconciled."†

The apostle says in one place, "They that are in "the flesh cannot please God." And in another he states

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* Rom. v. 1—11. † Col. i. 21.

that Enoch " before his translation had this testimo-
" ny that *he pleased* God, but without faith it is im-
" possible to please him; for he that cometh unto God
" must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder
" of them that diligently seek him." Hence it must follow, either that none but the regenerate are capable even of that lowest exercise of true faith, which is here described; or that an unregenerate man may please God. For St. Paul shews what he meant by the ex-expression *in the flesh*, where he subjoined; " But
" ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; if so be the
" Spirit of God dwell in you: Now if any man have
" not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."*

The proud and carnal enemy of God may tremble, feel temporary pangs of conviction, feign submission, and even yield a forced and unwilling obedience, as Pharaoh did. He may perceive danger, be filled with anguish and horror, and in this state of alarm cry for mercy, and seem willing to accept of it in any way the Lord pleases; but he cannot cordially allow the *justice* of the sentence which he would deprecate; and therefore his reliance on *mercy* can be only pretended. He is burdened with *dread of punishment*, but not with a *sense of guilt;* for *guilt* implies the *desert of punishment:* but the person here characterized excuses and paliates his sins, and gives intimations that he thinks the law unreasonably strict and its sentence needlessly severe.—You may indeed delineate a character of God suited to the *taste* of his heart, and frame

* Rom. viii. 6—9. Heb. xi. 5, 6.

a gospel soothing to his self-love: yet he cannot but be at enmity against an infinitely holy and just God, and his spiritual and perfect law: and the gospel of Christ likewise must be his aversion, unless misrepresented or misunderstood.—Even the sense of danger in this case soon wears off; (unless it terminate in despair:) "There is no fear of God before his eyes." He feels not the load of his sins in a humbling, and abiding manner. He is spiritually dead, and incapable of spiritual perception and discernment: and regeneration alone can render the heart susceptible of other feelings and affections. But when this change has taken place, in proportion as the new-born babe, by desiring and drinking in "the sincere milk of the word," becomes acquainted with the perfections and commandments of God, and his own character and situation, guilt oppresses his conscience, and permanently burdens his heart; except as the knowledge of the gospel gives him relief. Now he groans and struggles for deliverance: he fears, mourns, prays and in a confused manner hopes for mercy, even if his acquaintance with the truth be very defective; nor will he ever find rest to his soul, till he comes to Christ for it, whatever methods he may try for that purpose. Perhaps the Lord may shew him his refuge, as speedily as he discovers his guilt and danger, and in this case he soon has "peace and "joy in believing."—Nay it sometimes happens, that a man is taught the nature and glory of the gospel, and the way of salvation which it reveals, even before he has *distinct* and *deep* views of his own exceeding sinfulness: and then all other holy dispositions seem

to be subsequent to faith in Christ and a lively hope of salvation; yet in fact that *state* and *feeling* of heart, which disposes him to welcome the true gospel, essentially implies the existence and *incipient* actings of all other gracious affections.

These cases occur most frequently during great revivals of religion, or among those who have been previously well instructed in evangelical truth: but we should be careful not to limit the Lord, when we hear of sudden conversions in other circumstances.— "The tree must be known by its fruits."

On other occasions an ignorant or careless trifler, a self-righteous pharisee, a prejudiced heretick, a man rivetted in error by "science falsely so called," nay sometimes a scoffing infidel, or a daring blasphemer, is made a partaker of spiritual life; and the Lord sees good to lead him by slow degrees into the knowledge of the truth. He now trembles and hopes alternately: he searches the Scripture, and beseeches God to shew him the way of salvation: yet he strives against conviction, and his prejudices exclude the light which shines around him. He acts conscientiously, and obeys in difficult circumstances, from a general belief of God's word, and reliance on his promises: yet he knows but little of the truth, and does not perceive in what way *sinners* may trust in the Lord, and expect promised blessings from him. He tries to establish his own righteousness: but increasing knowledge and spiritual perception frustrate all his attempts, and prolong his uneasiness and remorse. He would fain make some compromise, and retain at least his old foundation: but he is driven from one false re-

fuge after another, till he is ready to give up all hope. He has perhaps long considered the preachers and professors of evangelical truth, as either deluded enthusiasts or artful deceivers; and is therefore cautious to excess. He has been accustomed to regard the doctrine of free salvation as unfavourable to personal holiness; and clearer discoveries of the divine purity and justice increase his assurance that true religion must be practical, and produce obedience and conformity to God: though he has not hitherto understood the sanctifying tendency of the gospel. He feels, however, a powerful attraction to the Saviour, as the centre and rest of his soul, and he imperceptibly verges towards him; though nothing can be more contrary than this, to the former disposition and experience of his heart. But at length, after many fluctuations, he is brought to understand and believe the testimony of God concerning his Son, and to perceive the nature, suitableness, and glory of his salvation. Then his difficulties vanish; in admiring and adoring love and gratitude, with Thomas, he acknowledges the Saviour as his Lord and his God; and "counts all "things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge "of Christ," and the blessings he is exalted to bestow.

This is a compendious statement of the author's own experience, during the course of about two years; as he has elsewhere more fully related it:* and he cannot doubt, but there was *life*, spiritual perception, reverence of God's authority, earnest desires of hap-

* Force of Truth.

piness in his favour and service, longings after holiness, and a general reliance on the divine mercy and faithfulness, during that whole period; at sometimes as vigorous, as any which he has since experienced. He has likewise met with several others, who have been led in a similar way.

The examples of Nicodemus, of Joseph of Arimathea, and even of the apostles themselves, exhibit something of the same kind: for before our Lord's resurrection, none of these seem to have believed *more* concerning him, than many nominal christians now do; only they *believed with the heart*, and their faith, the effect of regeneration, influenced their practice. Was not Peter alive to God, when Christ said, "Blessed art thou Simon Barjonas; for flesh and "blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Fa- "ther which is in heaven?" Yet the doctrine of our Lord's crucifixion, which we deem essential to the gospel, was an offence to him, as well as to the other apostles. If it be said, 'they were under a peculiar 'dispensation:' let it be also allowed, that others may be under a similar dispensation. The doctrine of the Messiah's expiating the sins of his people, by his sufferings and death, was plainly enough revealed in the Old Testament: John Baptist gave clear intimations of it,* and Christ himself frequently taught it: yet the prejudices of his disciples prevented them from receiving it; and he did not see good at once to remove those prejudices.—We should scarcely allow any one to be a true believer in Christ, if he did not

* John i. 29.

avow a dependence on his blood for the pardon of sin: yet the foregoing facts demonstrate that *living faith* may exist, in certain circumstances, where this dependance is not exercised.

Cornelius was doubtless regenerate and partaker of spiritual life, when "he feared God with all his house, "gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God "alway:" and when the angel said, "Thy prayers "and thine alms are come up for a memorial before "God." Yet Peter was sent to "tell him words, "whereby he and his house might be *saved.*"—Perhaps there is no entire system, for which men pertinaciously contend, that will in all respects coincide with this example.*

Should it be enquired, what would become of such a man, if he should die before he actually believed in Christ? not to insist on the absurdity of the supposition, which implies, that God in *special love* had begun a good work in a sinner's heart, and had been prevented by his death from accomplishing that gracious purpose! I cannot hesitate in answering directly to the point, *that he would certainly go to heaven.* I apprehend, that *whatever comes from the regenerating Spirit of Christ is accepted through the merits and mediation of Christ.*—Infants, "being by nature the "children of wrath even as others," cannot be meet for heaven without regeneration; yet even when regenerate, they are incapable of explicit faith: though that state of heart is produced, whence faith, as well as every other grace, will spring, if they live beyond

* Acts x. 2—4. 31. xi. 14.

the state of infancy: and as they fell in the first Adam without their own sin, they may doubtless be saved in the second Adam without actually believing in him.

No reflecting and candid person will maintain, that this doctrine represents the sinner as bringing something of *his own* to Christ, instead of receiving all from him: for He is not only the WAY, but the TRUTH and the LIFE also. The rays that precede the rising of the sun, come as certainly from it, as those which follow. Christ is exalted, not only to pardon and justify the penitent and believing, but likewise to give both repentance and faith. We have naturally no more a *moral* or *spiritual* ability to believe in Christ, than we have to fulfil the whole law: and the life communicated by his Spirit which disposes and enables us to welcome Him, as "made of God unto "us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and re-"demption," is itself the purchase of his blood, and the fruit of his intercession.—"The salvation of the "righteous is of the LORD:" but he works in a certain order, and makes some of his gifts a preparation for the rest; and regeneration in particular prepares the soul for receiving all other blessings.

"Of his own will begat he us with the Word of "Truth."—"Being born again, not of corruptible "seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, "which liveth and abideth for ever.—And this is the "word, which by the gospel is preached unto you."* They who have endeavoured to explain away these

* James i. 18. 1 Pet. i. 23—25.

texts, which plainly teach, that the word of the gospel is as the seed of regeneration, have deviated from scriptural simplicity: and should we attempt to shew *the manner*, in which the Holy Spirit uses this word of truth in regenerating the soul, we should fall into a similar fault.—We know not what *life* is, or *how* it is communicated. We cannot explain *the manner*, in which animals or vegetables are produced according to the course of nature: how then can we comprehend the operation of God in the new creation? Where the truths of the Scripture are preached, or in any way attended to; there sinners are regenerated: where these truths are wholly unknown or disregarded, such effects do not follow. This suffices to direct our conduct: but if we depend on the means instead of relying on God for his promised blessing, we shall be disappointed.

Man is capable of understanding, remembering, reflecting, hoping, fearing, and all other exercises of an intelligent mind, even while destitute of *spiritual* perception. The word of God is addressed to his understanding, heart, and conscience: and in general, even when it obtains the assent of the understanding, and the conscience is disquieted, the heart revolts, and, in one way or other, continues to manifest its aversion. But in some instances this aversion is overcome, nay, a state of heart diametrically opposite takes place; and it is evidently scriptural to ascribe this change to regenerating grace; though we cannot explain the manner, in which the Holy Spirit uses divine truth to effect it. It is, however, necessary to observe, that the Scriptures no where give the least in-

timation of our being *regenerated* by faith; though it will be shewn in the sequel that we are *sanctified* by faith.

Adam, created after the image of God in holiness, was capable of *changing*, and becoming unholy, *without any positive divine interposition.* Satan's insinuations, therefore, *might*, when believed, produce *by their own efficacy* his image: yet surely man had begun to fall at the moment when he favourably listened to the temptation; and his *belief* of Satan's lies was *wicked* in itself, as well as the principle of his subsequent wickedness. But fallen man has no *natural* disposition to believe the holy truth of God: the progress therefore of sanctification by the Spirit may be ascribed to the energy of *faith*, but the disposition so to believe, as to be influenced by faith to holy obedience, must be the effect of special grace, and the beginning of the sinner's recovery from his fallen state. So that the argument, which some draw from the way in which Adam fell, to prove that faith precedes regeneration, is grounded on an evident misapprehension.

Under the notion, that *faith precedes and is the subordinate cause of regeneration*, schemes are often formed concerning the best manner of preaching, and the subjects principally to be insisted on, in order to produce a faith in the hearts of the unregenerate. And those parts of Scripture are commonly preferred, which speak most fully of evangelical subjects; under the persuasion, that a favourable opinion of the divine character, and an encouraging hope of mercy, have a tendency to produce a right temper of mind, and to reconcile the heart to God! But surely this arises from

inattention to the testimony of the apostle, that "the "carnal mind is enmity against God." For this most certainly means, that the heart of unregenerate men is averse to the *real character* of God; and not to a *mistaken notion* concerning him. The *unholy* heart irreconcileably hates the holy perfections of the Lord, and whatever bears the stamp of his holiness; and cannot possibly be pleased with a holy gospel, and nothing short of a total perversion of the truth can satisfy it. Hence unscriptural systems are devised, and propagated: for if the infinite justice and holiness of God, and his determination to take vengeance on all the workers of iniquity, be kept out of sight; if his holy law be either misrepresented as to its demands and sanction, or spoken of as unreasonably strict and severe: and if the gospel be considered as a kind of compensation for the rigour of the law, that it might be dispensed with and set aside, instead of being honoured and established:—then unregenerate sinners may be persuaded to presume on God's mercy, and brought to experience a variety of fervent, selfish, and transient affections. They will however continue unregenerate, and as much at enmity with the holy character, law, gospel, and service of the one, living, and true God, as ever: and more scriptural views of these subjects will most certainly and effectually destroy all their apparently good frames, and call forth all the latent enmity and rebellion of the heart, which were merely soothed and humoured, instead of being dethroned and crucified. So indispensably necessary is regeneration to a real belief of the uncorrupted gospel of Christ.

" I was," says the apostle, " alive without the law " once: but when the commandment came, sin reviv- " ed and I died." " I, *through the law*, am dead to " the law, that I might live unto God!" " For by the " law is the knowledge of sin." In general, the preaching of the holy law of God, in its spirituality, extent, excellency, and awful sanction, is the method which is most blessed, to bring sinners to renounce every kind of self-confidence, and to feel their need of Christ and his salvation: but the preaching of mere *morality*, according to systems of ethicks, ancient or modern, is widely different both in its nature and tendency. It by no means exhibits the awful, perfect, and glorious law of God, " the ministration of condemnation," to honour which, the eternal Son of the Father became incarnate, and was obedient even unto the death upon the cross: but on the contrary it calls men to practise duties, according to a scanty, imperfect, and indeterminate rule; which consequently leads to self-complacency and neglect of the gospel. Let any man thoroughly preach the holy law of God, with close application to the conscience, and a fair declaration of the sinner's condition according to it: and if he do not discover and preach the gospel too, he will soon despair himself, and drive all who continue to regard him to despair likewise.

Sometimes, however, the Holy Spirit leads the sinner at once to the cross of Christ, and in that single object shews him both his guilt and his redemption. Here he learns the glory of the law itself, with the evil and desert of transgression; but he cannot thus learn all *the particular requirements* of the law; or

clearly discover in what respect he needs repentance, forgiveness, and divine grace to enable him to "walk "in newness of life." The whole word of God should therefore be preached, and his whole counsel declared; in proportion as the minister is enabled to get acquainted with it, and as the people are able to receive it; and then the Lord will bless what part of truth he sees good. But let it be especially observed, that neither law nor gospel, precepts nor doctrines, threatenings nor promises, will change men's hearts or produce true faith, without the life-giving power of the Spirit.

It is argued, by some writers that *faith in Christ* must precede regeneration, because spiritual life springs from union with Christ, and faith is the principle of our union with him. But I apprehend that this argument rests on no solid ground. The Holy Spirit is the *Life*, or *animating soul*, of that Body of which Christ is the Head. The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus quickens the dead in sin: thus they are made alive to God, and by this *uniting Cause and Agent* they become spiritually one with Christ, as living by his life, frequently even before they have explicit knowledge of him. "He that is joined to the Lord "is one spirit." "By one Spirit we are all baptized "into one body." We become alive to God, not by our apprehending Christ, but by his apprehending us: and in consequence we are brought to believe in his name. So that living faith in Christ is the *effect*, and not the *cause* of our union with him; if we would speak of the subject in an exact argumentative manner. Faith constitutes our *relation* to Christ as "made

" the righteousness of God in him:" and till we are conscious of explicitly believing in him, we cannot know, or warrantably take any comfort from an union with him: and as this is the case, we generally speak of faith as uniting us to Christ, when discoursing in a popular style. But surely this is a feeble foundation, on which to rest a conclusion, that is evidently repugnant to the constant tenour of Scripture! " *Of him* " are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto " us, Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and " Redemption." According to these words of the apostle, even the wisdom, by which we count all but loss for Christ, was derived from Christ by the grace of that Spirit, by whom we are baptized into him, and are One with him. Who then can think, with these words before his mind, that the faith of an *unregenerate* sinner is the uniting principle between Christ and his soul?

" Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spi- " rit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Fa- " ther." This and similar texts evidently refer, not to regeneration, but to that holy joy and confidence in God as a Father, by which " the Holy Spirit witnesses " with our spirits that we are the children of God;" and which are connected with the lively exercise of all other filial affections.—It will hardly be maintained, that we are *actually* the children of God while unregenerate: whatever may have been the secret purposes or *predestination* of God respecting our future adoption: but we must be the children of God *in very deed*, when the Spirit of adoption witnesses that we are so; for he bears witness to nothing but the

truth. Indeed the expression, "Because ye are sons," clearly marks this distinction; and our Lord confirms this, when he says to his disciples, "If ye love me "keep my commandments; and I will pray the Fa- "ther, and he shall give you another Comforter, that "he may abide with you for ever."* The apostles were certainly *regenerate*, when these words were addressed to them; as the supposition of their *loving Christ and keeping his commandments* most clearly proves: yet the promise evidently referred to the holy consolations of the Spirit, and not to his miraculous powers. This may suffice to shew, that the Scriptures, which mention the Spirit of *adoption*, as given subsequent to faith, being the *witness*, *seal*, *earnest*, and *first-fruits*, of our blessedness as the children of God, not at all relating to regeneration, prove nothing against the doctrine maintained in this part of our subject.

The Scriptures indeed speak of those who believe not in Christ, as being under wrath and dead in sin: but these declarations are *general* truths, which must be explained by the constant tenour of holy writ. If any person persist in rejecting Christ and his salvation, after a fair opportunity of hearing the gospel, he is no doubt dead in sin, and the wrath of God abideth on him.

But supposing the Bible put into any person's hand, along with the evidence of its being a divine revelation; no warranted conclusion can be drawn as to the state of his mind, while he is employed in diligent-

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* John xiv. 15—18.

ly examining the subject; or till it appear whether he be disposed to welcome, or reject, the salvation of Christ. Even when a man is convinced that the Scriptures are divinely inspired, and disposed to believe the record of God which they contain: some time will be requisite for him to discover "the truth as it is in Je-"sus," in order that he may explicitly believe in him: unless he be taught by immediate inspiration, and not by the ordinary influences of the Holy Spirit accompanying the diligent use of instituted means. Should the gospel be heard with the docility of a little child; the hearer must have time to compare the instructions of the preacher with the infallible standard of divine truth; that he may "know of the doctrine, whether it "be of God, or whether men speak of themselves." This was the conduct of the Bereans, "These were "more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that "they received the word with all readiness of mind, "and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those "things were so. Therefore many of them believed." Their attention, teachableness, impartiality, diligence, and willingness to be determined by the oracles of God, constituted the *honest and good heart*, which suits the good word of the kingdom; and this essentially distinguished them from prejudiced and obstinate despisers and persecutors of the apostles, who persisted in contradicting and blaspheming.

The Lord finds his people in different situations and of widely dissimilar characters; and he leads them in a vast variety of ways: but he brings every one of them in his appointed time to count all things but loss that he may win Christ.—So long, therefore, as

men neglect this great salvation, we must continue to warn, them, that " he who believeth not the Son " of God shall not see life; but the wrath of God " abideth upon him." In popular addresses it is by no means expedient to make many distinctions, exceptions, or limitations: yet it is of great consequence that the publick teachers of religion should themselves be familiarly acquainted with such distinctions as are important: and then they will so purpose the simplest general truths as not to contradict the deepest parts of heavenly wisdom; which " are strong meat, " belonging to those that are of age, even such as by " reason of age have their senses exercised to discern " both good and evil." Nay, ' if men (as one well ' observes,) will distinguish ill; they must be opposed ' by those who distinguish better, and not by such as ' do not distinguish at all.' If any one should attempt to expound certain precepts of our Lord's sermon on the mount, in an unqualified and unlimited sense, and to deduce the utmost practical consequences from them; every solid divine would protest against such a mode of interpretation, shew it to be contradictory to other parts of Scripture, and justly remark that those exceptions and restrictions must be admitted, which common sense could not fail to suggest, and which it might not be needful to particularize in a public discourse. And ought not the same rules of interpretation to be adopted, when such declarations, as these which we are now considering, are made in a general manner? Certainly they ought; otherwise the Scriptures must perpetually appear to be in opposition to themselves. And when thus explained, they are not

in the least repugnant to the proposition, that true faith is always the effect of regeneration.

There may be a vital spark, or a dawning ray, where nothing but darkness and death are discernible by us: and we should remember, to copy him, who "will "not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruis-"ed reed."—For "the path of the just is like the "shining light, which shineth more and more unto "the perfect day." A ray of light breaks in upon the previous reign of entire darkness, and imperceptibly diminishes the gloom: but coming from the sun, it indicates his approach, and will continue to advance till it arrive at the full blaze of noon. "On you that "fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise, "with healing in his wings." "Then shall ye know, "if ye follow on to know the LORD; his going forth "is prepared as the morning." "If any man *will do* "*the will of God*, he shall know of the doctrine "whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I "will lead them in paths, which they have not known; "I will make darkness light before them, and crook-"ed things straight." These and similar passages in Scripture naturally lead us to consider the work of God, in drawing the sinner unto himself, by Christ the living Way, in many instances at least, as very gradual: and they by no means can be made even to appear consistent with the opinion, that a man continues absolutely dead in sin, till after he has come to Christ, and has explicit knowledge of him, and faith in him; or even, as some state it, a full assurance of an interest in his salvation.

The new-born infant instinctively craves the milk of the breast, though incapable of understanding the nature of its wants and desires: but various circumstances may retard its actual satisfaction in the wholesome nutriment provided for it.—Thus the new-born babe, in the spiritual world, feels a strong desire after the sincere milk of the word, yet often scarcely knows what he wants or seeks for: but the salvation of Christ alone can satisfy the new desires which he experiences; and whatever may hinder his progress, he will still continue uneasy and enquiring, till brought to live explicitly by faith in the Son of God. Then he will seek no further, except to secure and enjoy the satisfying blessings which he has discovered.

And now let the reader seriously and impartially consider these several arguments, and endeavour to estimate their collective force: after which, let him determine whether it has not been completely proved, that, according to the word of God, *saving faith is always the effect of regeneration;* and consequently that it is *holy* in its nature, as well as in its fruits.

SECTION III.

Saving Faith always accompanied by other Things essentially holy.

ANOTHER most conclusive argument to prove the *holy* nature of faith, may be deduced from the other *holy* exercises of the heart with which it is inseparably connected.

No man ever yet truly believed in Christ, without some measure of *humiliation for sin:* and where this is totally wanting, a professed believer can at most rank no higher than a stony-ground hearer, "who "has no root in himself," in whatever manner slavish terrors have been succeeded by selfish comforts. But when a careless sinner, or a proud despiser of the gospel, is brought, with downcast eyes, to smite on his breast, and from his inmost soul to cry, "God be "merciful to me a sinner;" he certainly thus far manifests *a right spirit*.—In the parable here alluded to, the question is not, what the Pharisee *proudly* assumed concerning his own sanctity; or what the publican *humbly* confessed of his own sinfulness; but, whether the humble confession of the one was not *intrinsically better*, than the proud boastings of the other? And,

whether the publican's self-abasing cry for mercy was not an exercise of *true holiness?*—That it sprang from humility, and contrition, and was not extorted by mere terror, our Lord himself testifies; " I tell " you, that this man went down to his house justifi- " ed rather than the other: for every one that *hum-* " *bleth himself* shall be exalted."* And this testimony ought to be decisive: for it evidently proves that genuine humility inseparably attends on justifying faith, even in its feeblest and most discouraged applications for pardoning mercy.

The Pharisee did not arrogate the honour of making himself to differ from other men; at least the words ascribed to him imply the contrary: and indeed the same is observable in the language of many who are notorious for spiritual pride. But he presumptuously deemed himself eminent in holiness, when he was altogether unholy; and established in the full favour of God, from which he was entirely estranged. If a man say, ' God I thank thee for giving me humility, repentance, and newness of heart;' and then rely on these supposed endowments as the meritorious ground of his justification; let him be classed with the Pharisee: but surely we may *know* that God hath given us these holy dispositions, and that " by his " grace we are what we are," and heartily thank him for his special love in thus making us to differ; without in the least " trusting to our own righteousness, and " despising others;" or else the most eminent believers, both of the Old and New Testament, must be

* Luke xviii. 14.

joined with us under this condemnation.—In whatever measure we have experienced "the sanctifica-"tion of the Spirit unto obedience," we shall not, if properly instructed, depend on it in the smallest degree for justification: and if this be the case of the most eminent saint on earth; why should it be supposed, that the least conceivable spark of true holiness even when *not discerned*, must lead the new convert to a self-righteous confidence, and indispose him to seek the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ?

Saul of Tarsus when a proud Pharisee, expressed the most contemptuous enmity against the holy Jesus, and "breathed out threatenings and slaughter" against his harmless disciples.—But view this same person, prostrate on the ground, trembling with apprehensions of *merited* vengeance, supplicating undeserved mercy, and saying to the Saviour, "Lord, what wouldest "thou have me to do?"—Then observe him, when "what things *were gain to him*, those he counted "loss for Christ;" and determine whether no degree of genuine humiliation was connected with his first exercises of faith in the Son of God.

But if we carefully examine the language of Scripture, we must be convinced, that *humility* is a radical and most important part of holiness; and especially that humiliation for sin is essential to the existence of holiness in the heart of a fallen creature.—"To this "man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a "contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word." "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the king-"dom of heaven." "God resisteth the proud, and

" giveth grace unto the humble." Nay, a great part of the holiness of redeemed sinners, even in heaven, seems to consist in a disposition to ascribe all their salvation " to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and " to the Lamb that was slain;" and in feeling, and acting consistently with the recollection of their own deep guilt, and their inexpressible obligations to the special mercy and love of the Redeemer. Indeed if pride were the first sin of apostate spirits, humility must be most essential to the holiness even of angels.

The degree of genuine humility, connected with the sinner's first actings of faith in Christ, may be very small: but will any Christian say, that there is absolutely none at all? Or that pride is at that moment in full dominion? Can a sinner embrace the salvation of Christ in a cordial manner, without the least disposition to abase and condemn himself? Can he, when merely alarmed by the dread of a punishment, which he does not allow that he deserves, sincerely seek the deliverance from free unmerited mercy? Can he sincerely seek this mercy, in the most humiliating way imaginable, without the least degree of humiliation? And if his *professed* reliance on free grace through Emmanuel's atoning blood, be *insincere*, will a heart-searching God justify him on account of a hypocritical pretension? " Blessed is the man, to whom " the Lord will not impute iniquity, and *in whose spi-* " *rit there is no guile.*"

In a word, it has often been said, and it never has been disproved, that ' there can be no more *mercy* in ' the sinner's salvation, than there was *justice* in his ' condemnation:' it is therefore absolutely impossible

for any one cordially to welcome salvation altogether of *mere mercy*, unless he sincerely *allow* that he might *justly* have been left under condemnation.

Again, did our Lord, in the parable of the prodigal son, design to represent the returning sinner as driven merely by distress to seek deliverance from God? What did he then mean by the expression, *When he came to himself?*—The prodigal is supposed to have felt his *misery* before, (as devils and damned spirits do,) with proud and determined alienation of heart from his father and the rules of his family: but "when he "came to himself," he awaked as out of sleep, he recovered as from intoxication, he was restored as from insanity; and then he became sensible of his sin and folly.—Other thoughts now arise in his mind concerning his father's character, authority, and conduct; and his own past behaviour and present situation: and he breaks out into this exclamation; "How "many of my father's servants have bread enough "and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise "and go to my father; and will say unto him, Father, "I have *sinned against heaven and before thee, and* "*am no more worthy to be called thy son.*" Are not these expressions of sorrow and humiliation for sin, and of deep abasement? No extenuation or excuse is so much as thought of by the self-condemned penitent; but he deduces his whole encouragement to return home, from the known kindness and compassion of his offended father.—Thus he is represented as resolving to return home, from right principles and in a right spirit: and when welcomed with immense kindness, and without any upbraidings, by his loving

parent; he alters not the terms of his intended confession, except by leaving out the concluding words, as superseded by the undeserved and unexpected reception he met with. As this parable was purposely framed by our Lord, to illustrate the dealings of our merciful God towards the vilest of sinners, who come to him in his appointed way: it is absolutely decisive, that he considered godly sorrow, humiliation, and unreserved confession of guilt, as never-failing attendants on saving faith.* And the arrangement of the parable contains a demonstration, that regeneration is at all times antecedent to faith, as the cause is antecedent to the effect.

Every serious student of the Scriptures must have observed, that they always represent repentance and faith as inseparably connected. It is not indeed worth while formally to dispute, which of these twin-graces is first exercised by the newly regenerated sinner: a belief of some divine truths may shew him his need of repentance; and some degree of a penitent disposition may render him sensible, that he wants an interest in Christ's salvation by faith in his name. It suffices to say, that true repentance is a *believing repentance*, and true faith is a *penitent faith*.—A general belief of God's mercy and readiness to forgive seems essential to genuine repentance; but more explicit views of the way in which mercy is vouchsafed, are not always requisite: yet repentance is doubtless rendered more deep, spiritual, and ingenious, in proportion as the glory of the gospel is understood, and its conso-

* Luke xv.

lations experienced.—We ought not, however, to overlook, much less to invert the order in which the inspired writers mention repentance and faith. "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." "Repent and be converted, *that your sins may be blotted out.*" "Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ."—"If peradventure God will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."*

If it please God to Give repentance to an opposer of his gospel, he will then acknowledge the truth, believe in Christ, and be saved: but if God do not give him repentance, he will continue an unbeliever held fast in the snare of the devil. This at least completely proves, that true repentance always accompanies the first actings of saving faith. And a man's views must certainly be unscriptural, when he cannot support them without inverting or altering the language of inspiration.

The word translated *repentance* denotes *a change of mind:* but surely no christian will deliberately maintain, that this change takes place only in the *understanding*, without at all influencing the will and *affections!* Or that it is merely a change of opinion about the doctrine of justification! Yet incautious expressions to that effect are not uncommon. We read however not only of "an *evil heart of unbelief* in departing

* 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26.

" from the living God;" but also, of an hard and *impenitent heart*, " through which sinners treasure up " to themselves wrath against the day of wrath." So that, beyond all dispute, the change of mind, which is called *repentance*, peculiarly relates to the *heart;* without which every change of opinion can at most only amount to a *dead faith* and *a form of knowledge.* True repentance implies an entire revolution in a man's views and judgment respecting himself, and every thing to which he stands related; and in all his corresponding dispositions and affections. But though this internal change be especially denoted by the word thus translated: yet when the term is used in a popular sense, and as distinguished from *regeneration*, it includes fear of divine wrath, godly sorrow, humiliation, hatred of sin and all its pleasures and profits, forsaking sin, turning to God with ingenious confession and cries for mercy, and entering on a new course of life.—It is needless in this place to enter further on the subject, as the publick has long been in possession of the author's deliberate thoughts upon it:* but if any man doubt of what has been here advanced: let him carefully and impartially consider the Scriptures referred to, with the several contexts: and I apprehend he will find it impossible to resist conviction.† In the last passage referred to, the apostle speaks of *godly sorrow as preceding, and* " *working repentance unto* " *salvation, not to be repented of:*" surely then no re-

* Discourse on Repentance.

† Job xlii. 6. Jer. xxxi. 19. Ezek. xviii. 28. Matt. iii. 8—10, xxi. 29—32. Luke xv. 10, 17, 21. 2 Cor. vii. 9—11.

pentance is saving or genuine, which is unconnected with godly sorrow!

Repentance is both the *command* and the *gift* of God. It is our duty; but without divine grace we are wholly indisposed to perform it: and in this respect it resembles all other duties, each of which is the subject of promises as well as of precepts; and none of them are performed in the right manner, except as the Lord gives us *a new heart and a new spirit.* "God" (by the gospel) "commandeth all men every "where to repent." "Jesus is exalted to be a Prince "and a Saviour, to give repentance—and forgiveness "of sins." Repentance belongs entirely to the gospel and to the covenant of grace; and has nothing to do with the law, and the covenant of works; except in our being grieved and humbled at heart for violating them, and in our humbly confessing that we deserve that wrath of God which is denounced against every transgressor.—The gospel alone gives the call to repentance, the encouragement to repentance, and the grace of repentance: it is therefore most astonishing that the preaching of repentance should have ever been called *legal*, or thought inconsistent with the free grace of the gospel! Or that repentance should ever have been almost excluded from the list of evangelical graces, the constituent parts of true holiness.

But says our Lord, "What think ye? A certain "man had two sons, and he came to the first, and said, "Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered "and said, I will not; but afterwards he repented and "went. And he came to the second, and said like-

" wise; and he answered and said, I go Sir, and went " not.—Verily, I say unto you, the publicans and " harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven, before " you.—For John came unto you in the way of righte- " ousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans " and harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen " it, *repented not afterwards, that ye might believe.*" Hence we learn that the general belief of John's testimony brought the publicans and harlots to repentance, and this repentance prepared them for admission into the Messiah's kingdom by faith in him: and if the Pharisees had repented of their sin, in rejecting the ministry of John, their repentance would have been connected with the same faith in him to whom John bare testimony. Indeed the office of John Baptist, in preparing the way of the Lord, as the herald of the Saviour to proclaim his appearance and introduce his gospel, is peculiarly important in this argument.—He first called sinners to repentance, shewed the Jews in general the fallaciousness of trusting in their national privileges, and the Pharisees in particular the emptiness of their forms and external services: he used the proper means of convincing all sorts of persons of their guilt and danger; and then pointed out to them " the Lamb of God " that taketh away the sin of the world;" " the Son " of God," who " baptizeth with the Holy Ghost:" concluding with this solemn declaration and warning, " the Father loveth the Son and hath given all things " into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath " everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, " shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on

him."* And his whole ministry undeniably proves, both that genuine repentance is always connected with saving faith; and that it is an important part of that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord."

This appears also in a very convincing manner in the singular example of the penitent thief, who upon the cross *humbly* acknowledged, that he deserved his ignominious and torturing death; while he believed in the Saviour, suspended beside him, for the salvation of his soul from future condemnation. Was there no essential difference in the frame of his spirit, from that of the other thief, who, in the agonies of death, joined the multitude in reviling the holy Jesus? Did this difference arise from any other cause than regeneration? And was not he a partaker of true holiness?

Confession of sin, an essential part of true repentance, is every where represented as inseparable from saving faith, and *preparatory to forgiveness.* "He that "covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso con- "fesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy."† "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, "and the truth is not in us."—"If we confess our "sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, "and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."‡ "I "acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity "have I not hid.—I said, I will confess my transgres- "sions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity "of my sin."§ "Wash me thoroughly from mine "iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin; *for I acknow-*

* John iii. 35, 36.
† Prov. xxviii. 13.
‡ 1 John i. 8, 9.
§ Ps. xxxii. 5.

"*ledge my transgression*, and my sin is ever before "me."* The publican, the prodigal son, the thief upon the cross, and other instances already adduced, exemplify this ingenuous unreserved confession of their sinfulness: nor is there a single case in Scripture, real or parabolical, of a sinner acceptably applying to God for pardoning mercy, in which this disposition to glorify him, by a full and free confession, is not implied or expressed. "He looketh upon men; and "if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which "was right, and it profited me not: he will deliver "his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see "the light."†

No doubt this (as well as all other holy dispositions) may be counterfeited; and the appearance of humility assumed where the heart remains unhumbled. Thus Pharaoh, Judas, and several others confessed their sins in a partial, extorted, and reluctant manner. Yet no doubt, if genuine, it implies a *right spirit;* the proper frame of mind, in which a sinner ought to appear before his offended Lord, being exactly the reverse to a proud self-justifying disposition. He, who ingenuously confesses his sins, gives unto God the honour both of his justice and of his mercy, he expresses approbation both of the holy law and of the blessed gospel; he willingly submits to God's righteousness, and is prepared to welcome a free salvation; he adores the grace, which "hath abounded towards us, in all wis-

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* Ps. li. 1—5. † Job xxxiii. 27, 28.

"dom and prudence," and glorifies the Lord, as "*just*, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

"His name" (says the angel) "shall be called "Jesus; because he shall save his people *from their* "*sins*." "God, having raised up his Son Jesus, (says "the apostle) hath sent him to bless you, *in turning* "*away every one of you from his iniquities*." "He "gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, "and to purify unto himself, a peculiar people zeal-"ous of good works." Now let a reflecting person seriously ask himself, whether any one can truly believe in Christ, without in the least understanding this part of his salvation, or desiring the principal blessing which he confers on his people? Can he desire salvation from sin, without the least hatred of sin or love of holiness? Or can there be any hatred of sin and love of holiness in a heart that is entirely unholy? —The views of a newly-awakened sinner may be extremely confused, and the fear of wrath with desires of deliverance from it, may greatly preponderate in his experience: nor should this be condemned as *mere selfishness*, while salvation from deserved punishment is sought from God's mercy in his appointed way; for even this, is directly contrary to our natural pride and enmity against God; and the desire of happiness is as strong in a holy as in an unholy creature. Indeed the sinner himself in his first application for mercy, may not, during the anxious trepidation of his heart, perceive any thing more than a desire of forgiveness and happiness in the favour of God: yet in reality, every acting of true faith in Christ is connected with some degree of desire to be delivered from sin, and to be made holy. This will appear to the in-

telligent observer; in that tenderness of conscience, and dread of relapsing into former evil ways, which are manifested by convinced sinners, in their deepest distress, and which often help the judicious pastor to discriminate between those convictions which arise from spiritual illumination, and the terrors which spring from merely natural principles.

Indeed they, who are well versed in doctrinal discussions, may feel *a kind of wish* after sanctification, without any hatred of sin or love of holiness, from a conviction that they cannot be saved unless they be sanctified: and thus the common saying, 'the desire 'of grace is grace,' should be used with caution, or it may aid the enemy to deceive men's souls.—But persons of this description will not sincerely seek to Christ for any part of his salvation, or diligently use the proper means. "The soul of the sluggard desireth "and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall "be made fat."*

When our Lord invites "the weary and heavy la-"den to come unto him, that they might find rest to "their souls;" he adds, "Take my yoke upon you, "and learn of me." He declares that he will treat all those as enemies, "who will not have him to reign "over them:" and every scriptural call to sinners *implies* the same instruction. "Seek ye the Lord, while "he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near: "let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous "man his thoughts; and let him return unto the "Lord, *and he will have mercy on him;* and to our "God, for *he will abundantly pardon.*"† Certainly

* Prov. xiii. 4. † Is. lv. 6, 7.

the evangelical prophet had no idea of *forgiveness and the comfort of it, preceding* every degree of true repentance, and all the works meet for repentance, according to the doctrine maintained by some modern teachers of free salvation. With these Scriptures before us, can we maintain, that any one truly returns to the Lord, by Christ the living Way, and faith in him, who does not so much as desire salvation *from his sins*, and renewal unto holiness? And is not a sincere and hearty desire of these blessings itself a genuine part of holiness?

It has been shewn, that humility, repentance, hatred of sin, with sincere desires to be saved from it, and a willing submission to Christ as our King, are inseparably connected with every exercise of genuine faith in him: and doubtless all these are branches of true holiness. The same also may be observed concerning the genuine spirit of prayer, which has properly been considered as the very breath of faith, and one of the first symptoms of spiritual life. A person, at a distance from the means of clear instruction, or perplexed in attempting to distinguish truth from falsehood, may sincerely pray for divine teaching, and other spiritual blessings, from a general knowledge and feeling of his wants, and a belief of some revealed truths; even previously to *explicit faith in Christ:* and thus he may be further enlightened as to the nature and glory of the gospel, and have the way of God expounded to him more perfectly.* But it cannot be conceived, that any one *has believed* in Christ, and been even justified by faith in him; while he has never

* Acts xviii. 24—28.

yet from his heart presented a single sincere petition for spiritual blessings!—Indeed the application of the soul to Christ for salvation seems to be essentially *prayer*, mental prayer, or as inseparable from it, as the motion of the lungs from the act of breathing, or that of the heart from pulsation. True christians are frequently in the New Testament distinguished as "those who call on the Lord Jesus Christ;" and it is said, "The same Lord over all is rich unto all that "call upon him: for whosoever shall call on the name of "the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call "on him, in whom they have not believed?"* It is allowed that no one can call on the Lord Jesus, before he has some degree of faith in him: but at the same time, these testimonies of the Scriptures prove, that the spirit of prayer inseparably accompanies every exercise of faith from first to last. Else what is the nature of faith? Is it merely assent and inactive reliance? Or is it the soul going forth with fervent desires after the mercy and grace, of which the urgent want is felt, to him whom it believes able and willing to deliver, to help, and to save? If this latter be the acting of faith in Christ, what is the *medium* of the soul's application to him, except the lifting up of the heart in desire and expectation? and this is the essence of prayer. Hence it is that salvation is so closely joined with prayer in many places in Scripture. "Thou Lord art "good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy "unto all them that *call upon thee*."† "Ask and it "shall be given you:—Every one that asketh receiv-

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* Rom. x. 10—14. † Ps. lxxxvi. 1—7.

" eth." " Let us come boldly to the throne of Grace, " that we *may obtain mercy*, and find grace to help " in time of need."—" All that call on the name of " the Lord shall be saved." According to these promises, it is as impossible a man should truly pray, and yet not be saved; as that he should truly believe, and not be saved: because genuine faith and prayer are inseparable.

Men may read, repeat, or even frame, prayers, in a formal manner, without the least degree of real holiness. They may *sincerely* ask for temporal things, " that they may consume them on their lusts;" or for deliverance from temporal calamities and dangers. They may even pray heartily to be saved from future punishment, and to be made for ever happy, according to their own notions of felicity, without any idea of what happiness consists in. But genuine prayer is the language of humility, and of spiritual desires and expectations: it is the expression of conscious indigence, dependence, and unworthiness; and of hearty longings after those blessings, which God alone can bestow, and which can only be enjoyed in his favour and presence. " Lord, thou hast heard the desire of *the hum-* " *ble;* thou *wilt prepare their heart;* thou wilt cause " thine ear to hear."*—Hence we read of " praying " in," or *by*, " the Spirit;" " praying in the Holy " Ghost," and " worshipping in spirit and truth." " The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the " Lord: but *the prayer of the upright is his delight.*"† Saul, when a Pharisee, may be supposed to have made long prayers: but these were doubtless very

* Ps. x. 17. † Prov. xv. 8.

different from the earnest supplications which he poured out before the Lord at Damascus, and which were thus noticed, "For behold he prayeth." Can it be conceived, that a holy God *delighteth* in any prayer, which hath nothing *holy* in its nature? Yet the *humble* supplicants, who are most acceptable to him, are most apt to be dissatisfied with themselves, and even to question the *sincerity* and *uprightness* of their earnest and fervent prayers.

The case of Manasseh may illustrate this subject: for none of those, who enter into the spirit and importance of this discussion, will deny that he found mercy by faith in the promised Saviour. The first intimation of any thing hopeful in his case is thus given: "When he was in affliction he besought the LORD "his God, and *humbled himself* greatly before the "God of his fathers, and prayed unto him; and he "was intreated of him, and heard his supplication." In the subsequent narrative, *his prayer* is repeatedly mentioned; and his sins *before he was humbled* are strikingly contrasted with his subsequent conduct.* Hence, I apprehend, we may infer with certainty, that acceptable prayer and genuine humiliation always accompany saving faith. "The sacrifices of God are "a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, "thou wilt not despise."

If then humility, godly sorrow, hatred of all evil, ingenuous confession, and whatever else belongs to true repentance, with upright desires after salvation from sin, and spiritual prayer, do indeed invariably

* 2 Chron. xxxiii.

attend every acting of faith in Christ; that faith must be *a holy exercise of a regenerate soul:* for surely none will maintain, that there is not the least symptom of spiritual life, the smallest degree of holiness, in any of these, or in all of them united! On the other hand, it can scarcely be imagined, that any will deliberately persist in maintaining, that justifying faith so precedes all humiliation, and other spiritual affections, as to be wholly unconnected with them; and that a man is actually justified and at peace with God, before he at all begins to humble himself, to be sorry for his sins, to confess and hate them, or to pray for spiritual blessings! This would invert the whole order of Scripture; and can never be *directly and consistently avowed* by a candid and serious disciple of the Lord Jesus; however he may be led, upon a controversial subject, to drop expressions, make statements, or adopt sentiments, which *fairly* admit of such an interpretation. —But in fact, the grand difficulty consists in prevailing with men, so far to examine their preconceived opinions, and to question the truth of them; as to bestow the pains requisite for duly weighing the force of those arguments, which from Scripture are brought against them; and either solidly to refute them, (at least so as to satisfy their own minds,) or candidly to acknowledge that they were mistaken.

SECTION IV.

The holy nature of Faith more directly shewn.

THE holiness of saving faith may not only be inferred from its Author, its source, and its concomitants; but likewise from a careful consideration of its peculiar nature.

The apostle exhorts christians to "build up themselves in their *most holy faith.*"* Should it be urged, that he meant *the doctrine* of faith, and not *faith* itself; we enquire, how *a most holy doctrine* can be received in a right manner by *a faith not at all holy?* We read of those, who "held" (or *imprisoned*) "the truth in unrighteousness;"—"because they liked not to retain God in their knowledge:"† and if this were the effect of man's carnal enmity against God, in respect of those truths which are discoverable by reason; what must be the opposition of the same principle to the message of the gospel?—When the assent of the understanding is compelled, by invincible evidence, to the *real* doctrine of the cross, the most determined resistance is excited: but in general men contrive to cast a shade over that part of truth which most offends them; and by an abuse of the other parts, they smo-

* Jude 20. † Rom. i. 18—28.

ther their convictions, and quiet themselves in a worldly course of life. This is especially effected by partial and unscriptural views of the gospel; and thus many evangelical professors "hold the truth in un-" righteousness," in the most awful sense imaginable.

Christianity, as stated in the Scriptures, displays the glorious justice and holiness of God, in connexion with the odiousness and desert of sin, and the sinner's tremendous danger of everlasting misery; more clearly than any other discovery ever made of the divine perfections and government; though in harmony with the most endearing and encouraging displays of love and mercy to the vilest of sinners. But if every thing be kept out of sight, or very slightly noticed, except the displays of infinite and everlasting love and mercy; unregenerate men may embrace this *mutilated* gospel with an *unholy* faith, and so encourage themselves in sin by the confident expectation of impunity. It will, however, still be undeniable, that *the most holy doctrine* of primitive christianity, can never be cordially embraced, except by a holy faith.

St. James carefully distinguishes a cordial consent to the true gospel from a *dead faith:* for saving faith is *living* and *operative;* and by it we receive the truth of revelation with cordial satisfaction and correspondent affections, as relating to our own situation, character, and everlasting interests. "Being warned of God," and "believing the truth," "we are moved with "fear;" we perceive ourselves in danger of the wrath to come, and *allow* that we deserve it; we submit to the righteousness of God, reverence his authority, and

implore his mercy; we discover the appointed refuge and flee to it; we perceive the suitableness of his salvation to honour his justice and law, as well as to glorify his grace; and this very circumstance, which offends the proud and carnal mind, renders it doubly precious to all those who have "received the love of "the truth, that they may be saved."

The apostle Paul speaks of the "faith of God's "elect:" and Peter addresses those "who had ob-"tained like *precious faith.*"* And thus he gives to *faith* the same epithet, which he annexes to the promises of God, and even to Christ himself:—*precious faith;—precious promises;—a precious Saviour:* surely then it must be a holy faith, which embraces, and seeks the performance of holy promises, and cordially welcomes a holy Saviour?

Let us, however, more closely examine that peculiar act or exercise of faith, by which we become interested in Christ and his salvation; and enquire whether it be *carnal* or *spiritual* in its specifick nature.—"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that "which is born of the Spirit is spirit:" there is no middle term between them.—Whatsoever is born of the flesh is carnal: and the apostle declares that "the car-"nal mind is enmity against God:" and that "they "who are in the flesh cannot please God." Hence we before inferred that the faith of an unregenerate man cannot please God: and here let it be carefully noted, that there is no alternative; but saving faith is either

* Tit. i. 1, 2. 2 Pet. i. 1.

holy or *unholy*, and not something of a middle nature, which is neither *holy* nor *unholy*.

True faith, simply credits the divine testimony, in those points, which most offend and oppose the pride and lusts of the human heart: and thus "he that believeth hath set to his seal that God is true;" while unbelief makes God a liar. Faith owns, as the Son of God, as "the Lord from heaven," as "God manifested in the flesh," that Jesus, whom unbelieving Jews crucified, and whom all unbelievers crucify afresh; and views him as now risen from the dead, reigning in glory, the Ruler and Judge of the whole world, Omnipotent to save and to destroy.—Faith embraces the doctrine of the cross with cordial approbation, as the wisdom and power of God unto salvation; while it is foolishness to those that perish.—Faith submits to God's righteousness, allows that every sinner deserves the threatened curse of the law, and renounces expressly all other pleas or confidences, except free mercy through the righteousness, atonement, and mediation of Emmanuel.—Faith unreservedly disavows all attempts to compensate for past sins, to establish a righteousness by any personal obedience or efforts whatever, or to save the soul from deserved and final destruction.—Faith gives the Lord credit for his wisdom, justice, and goodness, even where they are not discerned; and by it the self-condemned sinner ventures on his mercy and truth, in the grand concerns of eternity; entrusting the soul into his hands in full credence, confidence, and affiance, as both willing and able to keep that which is thus committed to him; and this in the clearest view of the

importance of the case, and the difficulties that lie in the way of salvation.—Faith "counts all things but "loss," in comparison of Christ and his salvation: it discovers "the Treasure hid in the field," "the Pearl "of great price;" and convinced that its value is inestimable, with joy *sells all*, to secure the advantageous purchase. Faith dreads nothing so much as falling short of that salvation, which unbelievers despise, and to which they prefer the most trifling interest or most worthless indulgence.—Faith comes at the Lord's call, uses his appointed means, waits in his way, stays his time, and says under every delay or discouragement, "Lord, to whom shall I go? Thou hast the "words of eternal life." These things are essential to faith, be it weaker or stronger; as it must be evident to every one, who makes the word of God the standard of his judgment. Even in its feeblest form, its first trembling application to Christ, while the distressed sinner cries with tears, "Lord, I believe, help "thou mine unbelief," it has this nature, and virtually implies all these things: and do not these denote some degree of a *right spirit*, of *a holy state* of the heart and affections?

The word of God no where mentions two sorts of true faith: but if the first actings of a sinner's faith in Christ were entirely devoid of *holiness*, and the subsequent exercises of faith were *holy;* some distinction of this kind would certainly have been intimated. If it could be proved that saving faith preceded regeneration, and every degree of evangelical repentance: surely no man would suppose, that all the subsequent exercises of faith, till it be swallowed up in vision,

result from merely natural principles, or such influences of the Spirit as are entirely distinct from sanctification; and that they are detached from repentance and all other holy dispositions and affections!—And will any experienced christian deliberately maintain, that the established believer's daily exercise of faith in Christ, for pardon, peace, wisdom, strength, and sanctifying grace, *essentially* differs from his first coming to him for salvation? We acquire indeed, as we go forward, more distinct acquaintance with our own wants, and with that fulness from which they are supplied: and at some times the testimony of our consciences, aided by that of the Spirit of adoption, inspires peculiar confidence in pleading the Lord's promises. But there are times also, when we feel such darkness, sinfulness, and perplexity, that we can only come on the ground of a general invitation; and when the whole of our first experience must be again passed through, as the best, or the only, way of finding rest to our souls. Nor are those humiliating seasons uncommon to most of us; when, "God be merciful to me; a "sinner," is of all other prayers most suited to our feelings; and when we come, to our own apprehension, as "poor, and miserable, and wretched, and "blind, and naked," as when we first "fled for re-"fuge to lay hold on the hope set before us." The degree and order of these experiences, desires, and affections, vary: but the *nature* of them is precisely the same, whether that be *holy* or *unholy*. It is all along, an ignorant helpless child, a criminal, a diseased perishing wretch, applying to an all-merciful and all-powerful Saviour, to be taught, pardoned,

cleansed, assisted, protected, relieved, enriched, and completely rescued and blessed, by free unmerited grace, through the redemption of his blood, the gift of his righteousness, the prevalence of his intercession, and the supply of his Spirit. The more simply and humbly this is done, the stronger is the faith exercised; and likewise the greater is the measure of a holy disposition which is manifested, though the person himself may not be conscious of it. The sinner, thus exercising faith in Christ, and coming to him continually for the supply of all his numerous wants, deliverance from merited destruction, and the free gift of eternal life; *judges* and *feels* concerning himself, his past conduct, his present duties, and his own heart, as he ought to *judge* and *feel*. "*He thinks so-* "*berly of himself*, and as he ought to think;" and in proportion, the state of his judgment and affections, respecting the perfections, law, and government of God; respecting sin and holiness, this world and the next, Christ and his gospel, and almost every other subject, is rectified, and rendered what it ought to be. This is implied in the very idea of "living by faith "in the Son of God," and is inseparable from it, from the first feeble trembling cry, "Lord, Save me, "I perish," till the believer, in full assurance of hope, breathes his last, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my "spirit."

If some of those, who maintain that there is no holiness in saving faith, (at least when first exercised by the convinced sinner) should be called to converse with a man, whom they had intimately known when a stout-hearted self-confident Pharisee; and should

find him deploring the wickedness of his past life, the hypocrisy of his proud duties, the worthlessness of his present endeavours to repent and seek mercy, and the exceeding deceitfulness of his own heart; should they hear him own that God might justly leave him to perish, and express many trembling apprehensions, lest the Saviour whom he had so long rejected should now reject him, and disregard his feeble, defiled prayers: should they, I say, witness this scene, would they not be convinced that an alteration for the better had taken place in his mind, and that, in proportion as he had more lowly thoughts concerning himself? Would they not be ready to say, "What hath God wrought?" And could they deny that the *change* was from a *wrong* to a *right* state of the heart and affections? or in other words, from *unholiness* to *holiness?* They would *feel*, that they ought not to enquire what the man thought of himself; but in what light that God, "whose judgment is according to truth," viewed his former and his present disposition; and what the Scripture has determined concerning it?

The sacred Scriptures distinguish between a *living faith*, and a *dead faith;* but not between a *legal* and an *evangelical faith*, as many persons now do: and on this ground alone, we may fairly conclude that this unscriptural distinction was devised to support an unscriptural system. *Dead faith* credits the doctrines of the gospel, as readily as other parts of revealed truth; and *living faith* as simply believes the testimony of God concerning the demands and curse of the law, a future judgment, and the wrath to come, as it does the doctrines and promises of the gospel. But, as it

hath before been observed, dead faith is merely an assent to certain opinions *as true*, without a cordial approbation of them as *holy*; *just*, *good*, *suitable*, and *valuable;* with reference to a man's own character, conduct, and situation. It is therefore either wholly *inefficacious;* (for being destitute of *spiritual* life it has no efficacy to excite *spiritual* affections, much less to produce them; and can only work by *natural* principles:) or it gives rise to slavish terrors connected with enmity, and sometimes terminating in blasphemous despair; (as "the devils also believe and tremble;") or it abuses divine truth by presumptuous confidence, and excites selfish affections without repentance, love, and holy obedience, like those of the Israelites when they saw the Egyptians dead on the sea-shore, as they are described by the psalmist: "Then believed they "his word and sang his praise. They soon forgat his "works, and would not abide his counsel; but lusted "exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in "the desert."* According to our Lord's words, converts of this description "have no root in themselves, "but for a while *believe*, and in time of temptation "fall away." And he teaches us how to address unproved professors of the gospel, by his own example as recorded by the Evangelists. "As he spake these "words many believed on him. Then said Jesus to "those Jews which believed on him; If ye continue "in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you "free."†

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* Ps. cvi. 12—14 † John viii. 30—32.

But *living* faith is an active principle in a soul alive to God: it receives the truth in love, and is permanently and *spiritually* operative upon the understanding, will, and affections. A dead corpse may have every limb, organ, and vessel, in exact order and proportion: while a living man may want an eye, a leg, or a hand, or be otherwise mutilated, defective, or ill proportioned. True faith therefore cannot be known by *the doctrines believed*, as the distinction between *legal* and *evangelical* faith seems to suppose; but by *the manner* in which they are believed. Many, who *in a certain way* credit the whole gospel, are hypocrites and dead in sin: while others whose creed is very defective, disproportioned, and in some respects erroneous, are sincere christians, and partakers of divine life. Perhaps they are out of the way of systematical, or even *solid*, instruction; or they are not yet freed from prejudices, through which they cannot receive some parts of divine truth; or they are babes in Christ, who feed on milk, and being unskilful in the word of righteousness cannot digest *strong meat:* yet their faith is *living*, and effectually influences their conduct; their imperfect views of truth are humbling, sanctifying, and transforming; and they are gradually, by searching the Scriptures and praying for divine illumination, "growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and "Saviour Jesus Christ."

When the apostle had said, "without *faith* it is impossible to please God;" he added, "for he that "cometh unto God, must believe that he is, and that "he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek

" him."* I apprehend, the reason he assigned for his universal proposition, is not very satisfactory to many persons, who steadily maintain the proposition itself; but it accords well to the views given in this publication. A general belief concerning the existence and perfections of the one living and true God, and his *merciful* readiness to accept, and even " re-" ward, those that diligently seek him," notwithstanding past offences and present sinfulness, has been and is essentially necessary, under every dispensation and in all possible circumstances, to encourage and incline men to *come unto God;* and it forms the lowest degree and exercise of *faith* that can be conceived. But many, we may warrantably conclude, have pleased God, in seeking him *as just and merciful*, on the ground of revelation, written, or handed to them by oral tradition, without *explicit* faith in Christ, or a clear knowledge of the plan of salvation.

Faith, even in that indistinct and incipient exercise which has been described, receives with cordial approbation many of those truths, against which the proud and carnal heart rises with disgust and indignation, or which it perverts to the vilest purposes. It consents to them on the ground of divine revelation, though they are contrary to man's vain imaginations and proud reasonings; and it practically uses them, in various instances, which run counter to worldly interest, reputation, indulgence, and natural inclination. —Even this must require a state of the heart far above the propensities of fallen man, and contrary to his

* Heb. xi. 6.

alienation from God, and whatever bears the stamp of his holiness. But when further illumination has led the believer to a more explicit knowledge of Christ, and to receive him for all the purposes of salvation: his faith is an exercise of the soul peculiarly humble, submissive, obedient, and expressive of unreserved reconciliation to God; and it contains almost as much genuine holiness in its nature, as any thing of which we are capable in this state of imperfection.

It is generally, and justly agreed, that all the graces of the Spirit have a near agreement, and intimate co-existence, a mutual subserviency, and an inseparable connexion: like the several colours of the sun-beams, which, though seen distinct in the prism and the rainbow; yet so coalesce, and blend together, as to form a pure and beautiful whiteness. Thus the love of God cannot subsist in that heart which is totally destitute of faith; or faith in the heart, which is at enmity with God.—True repentance is believing repentance; true faith is penitent faith; reverential fear cannot exist without love; holy love of God implies reverence, and fear of dishonouring and offending him: and an earnest desire that the Lord should be reconciled to us, and receive us into his favour according to the gospel, implies an incipient disposition to be reconciled to him, to his character, government, commandments, and service. And hence it is, that the approved character is described in Scripture, sometimes by one and sometimes by another of these holy dispositions: but we must not on that ground conclude, that they exist separately; but on the contrary, that where one is, there all are found.

It has before been observed, that by faith in Christ, is not *here* meant, 'a confidence that Christ and his 'salvation belong to me in particular, without any re-'gard to the state of my heart, or my real character 'at present in the sight of God.' Such a confidence may indeed be altogether *unholy;* and it is generally the selfish presumption of an unhumbled carnal heart, aided by an *unfeeling* or erroneous conscience, and acquired by the belief of an unscriptural representation of the gospel.

Divine faith must be grounded on the word of God: but no man's *name* is inserted in Scripture, as *names* are in *grants* and *wills;* to which the engagements and promises of the new covenant are sometimes compared. In order therefore to be assured, that I am the person to whom the promised blessings belong, I must enquire, whether my case and character accord with those described in the promises. Now these are not made to sinners *as such*, but to *saints;* to those *that fear the Lord, and tremble at his word:* to *the contrite*, the *broken-hearted*, the *mourners;* to those *who trust in the Lord, call upon him, follow after righteousness, know the Lord, love God, do his will, and hearken to the voice of his servants; to the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, those that hunger and thirst after righteousness*, and *such as are persecuted for righteousness sake.* In short the promises are made to those who *truly believe;* for faith is the radical principle of all holy dispositions. As far therefore, as we are conscious, that our experience, desires, pursuits, habitual aim, and character correspond to these dispositions and, affections; we may be *sure* that the co-

venanted blessings belong to us: yet in exactness of language this is not *faith*, but *hope;* the full *assurance of hope*. This should be sought after and preserved by holy diligence: and, as the humble believer, however diligent, will commonly be unable of himself to obtain full satisfaction in this matter; it is one part of the office of the Holy Spirit to shine on his own work, to shew us the sacred impression, by "which he hath "sealed us to the day of redemption," and thus "to "witness with our spirits, that we are the children and "heirs of God." The least degree indeed of these holy dispositions, according to the gracious tenour of the new covenant, characterizes the possessor as a real christian, and proves his interest in the promises: but in general he cannot make out his title, with habitual satisfaction, except as he is growing in grace, fruitful in good works, and careful not to grieve the Holy Spirit by negligence, or improper conduct.

If any man doubt, whether the promises be thus restricted to *characters*, and desire to give the subject an impartial investigation; let him *collect for himself from the Scriptures* all the promises he can find, and compare them diligently with the context: and this will convince him, that they all either expressly mention some branch of holiness, as marking out the persons to whom the promise is made; or relate to such blessings, as no man, destitute of holiness, can sincerely desire and long to obtain.

The *invitations* indeed, and such *promises* as imply *exhortations*, *counsels*, *warnings*, or *expostulations*, are addressed to the vilest of sinners without exception: but they alone become interested in the annexed

or implied promise, who embrace the invitation, attend to the exhortation, and 'through grace obey the 'call.' For it is *folly* not *faith*, for a man to imagine the *feast*, the *treasure*, the *kingdom to be his own;* merely because he has been invited, instructed how to come, exhorted to the diligent use of certain means, warned of the consequences of neglecting such unmerited kindness, and assured that nothing but this neglect can deprive him of the benefit: while all the time he absolutely refuses to comply with the end and design of the gracious message!

There is a sense, in which Christ may properly be said to have *died for all:* and the infinite sufficiency of his merits and atonement, with the general proposals made in the Scripture, *authorize* and *require* the ministers of Christ, to call on all that hear them without exception, to repent and believe the gospel. But sober christians, even if they hesitate as to some deep points of doctrine, will scarcely contend, that *Christ died with an express intention of saving all men:* yet this *express intention* alone could warrant a sinner, while an entire stranger to "the things which accom-"pany salvation," confidently to believe, that Christ died for him, and will assuredly save him. Such a confidence therefore is entirely destitute of any scriptural foundation, and is a most unwarrantable presumption.

Some persons indeed seem to think, that the proposition, *Christ is mine and will save me*, would never be true, if I should never believe it: but that, if I believe it confidently, with or without reason or evidence, it will certainly prove true! But surely it is very

extraordinary, not to say absurd, *that believing what before was not true should convert it into truth!*—The doctrines of Scripture are eternal truths whether we believe them or not; and God abideth faithful to his promises, though we prove faithless. When a sinner truly believes in Christ, he is interested in all the promises and securities of the new covenant, even while his fears and doubts harrass him incessantly: and when, on scriptural grounds, he obtains the *full assurance of hope*, he merely discovers what, though true in itself, he had not before been able to perceive.—One thing indeed is now *true* which once was not: namely, he is now born of God, a true penitent, a real convert, a believer, a living member of Christ's body, a child of God, a temple of the Holy Spirit, and an heir of heaven; whereas he was (not before his *assured hope*, but before his *regeneration*) dead in sin, a slave of Satan, and under the wrath of God, notwithstanding the secret purposes of electing love respecting him.

The words of St. Peter are peculiarly worthy of our attention in this argument. "Be ready always to "give an answer to every man that asketh you a rea-"son of the hope that is in you." Now the well instructed christian, and he alone, is capable of doing this. He can assign his reasons for believing the Scriptures to be the word of God; he can state the warrant and encouragement given in them to the chief of sinners to believe in Jesus Christ; and he can shew from his own experience, character, and pursuits, compared with the declarations and examples of the word of God, the grounds on which he concludes

himself a true believer, and an heir of immortal glory. But what *reason* can be given for an assured hope of everlasting life, as the gift of God in Christ, by that man who has no consciousness of having fled to him for refuge, and no experience of a new creation unto holiness?—Indeed it would exceedingly perplex one, to find words more suited to describe an *irrational*, *unscriptural*, and *enthusiastical presumption*, than those which some men have employed on this subject; while they have exhorted and counselled their readers, to 'work themselves, by the assistance of the 'Holy Spirit, into an assurance, that Christ, grace, 'and heaven are their's, without any evidence from 'reason, sense, or Scripture;' and then they have gravely told them, that all holiness will certainly result from this kind of confidence!* What *reason* can a man who follows this council give, either of his faith, or hope, or of his religion in general?

The amount of this assured persuasion (call it by what name you will) is no more than, *I believe that I am a believer.* But if this is true faith; and if the full assurance of faith is our duty, (and doubtless we ought to believe the testimony of God without wavering;) it follows of course, that *we cannot deceive ourselves:* for the more firmly a man *believes that he is a believer*, the stronger must his faith be! Thus all exhortations to self-examination, and all warnings against self-deception, with which the Scriptures abound, are at once vacated and set aside; and that man is actually the safest, who most confidently thinks himself safe!

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* Marshall on Sanctification.

Far be it from me to charge all, who favour, or seem to favour, this notion of faith, with *perceiving* or *allowing*, these consequences: for many of them bestow much laudable pains to inculcate a contrary spirit and conduct, and imagine they can shew that their doctrine has no such tendency. But after all, the *inference fairly* and *undeniably* follows from the *premises:* and more *consistent* men, who have none of their piety, will deduce it, and practise accordingly.

If the reader has imbibed the sentiment, that this high confidence of salvation by Christ, even without conscious humiliation and change of heart, is the strong faith spoken of in Scripture: let him very seriously ask himself, (and ask the Lord too in earnest prayer for his teaching) whether this is not the very character, delineated under the similitude of the stony-ground hearers? Whether this is not the vain-confidence of all those *evangelical hypocrites*, who deceive themselves without expressly designing to deceive others? And whether St. James does not most directly address such professed christians when he says, "Know, "O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"— These are questions which should not be cursorily passed over, by him who would know "the truth as "it is in Jesus:" for in fact they comprise the substance of the whole controversy.

It is not generally and expressly denied, by those who feel themselves interested in these enquiries, that the gospel was intended to honour the holy law of God; to display in perfect harmony the infinite justice, purity, wisdom, goodness, mercy, and truth of his all-glorious character; to lay a foundation for the *hope* of

the vilest transgressors, connected with the most effectual provision for their humiliation and renewal to the divine image; to excite in the hearts of the redeemed, the most fervent exercises of admiring, adoring, zealous, joyful, and thankful love to the God of their salvation; and finally to exhibit the divine glory, in the most awful and affecting light that possibly could be, to the whole intelligent creation through eternal ages.—But if another gospel be introduced, which *merely* provides for the encouragement of sinners *at any rate;* while the other ends, of infinite importance, are overlooked, or at least greatly kept out of sight: then the justice and holiness of God, and his strict and spiritual law, appear *terrible* rather than glorious and lovely; the odiousness, and desert of transgression are concealed or palliated; salvation from punishment is detached from " the sanctification of the Spirit un- " to obedience:" and then it is no wonder that unconverted men often credit such a gospel, which is entirely congenial to their pride and carnal minds. Because they may be delighted with the false notions thus given them of the character of God; while they continue to hate the infinitely just and holy God, whom the Scriptures reveal: as the Jews imagined they loved the God of Abraham, whose favourites they deemed themselves; though the Truth himself testified, " They have both seen and hated both me " and my Father." And having once thus awfully quieted and pleased themselves with an unholy faith, a presumptuous confidence, selfish affection, and a carnalized gospel; it is alas, not probable they should

ever be undeceived, till the light of eternity tremendously shew them their real character and situation.

The true gospel of Christ reveals "a just God and "a Saviour."—The eternal Son of the Father became incarnate, to honour the righteous demands of the holy law by a divinely perfect obedience, during the whole course of his suffering life; and to honour its curse by his unknown agonies in the garden and on the cross; that sinners, who *most justly deserved*, and who must otherwise inevitably have endured, the everlasting wrath of God, might through his merits, ransom, and mediation, be freely pardoned, completely justified, and gradually recovered to perfect holiness by the Spirit of God given unto them.—But an unhumbled, unholy heart cannot truly believe this gospel: and a faith which does not *allow* the excellency of the law, the desert of sin, and the justice of God in the awful sentence denounced against transgressors, cannot render him the *glory of his free mercy* in salvation. Much less can such a faith give God the glory of all his other perfections, as harmonizing with his mercy in that stupendous design, which is the admiration of angels, and all redeemed sinners, and shall be so to all eternity.

It is not meant, that the sinner, when he first comes for mercy to the Saviour, *distinctly* perceives these things: but he must be so far enlightened, humbled, softened, and changed, as to yield the point in contest: he must willingly come, as a *justly* condemned criminal, for a free and holy salvation in the Lord's appointed way. So that an *unholy* faith can only welcome an *unholy* gospel and make an *unholy* use of it:

and it is observable, that such respectable men, as are induced to plead in behalf of this kind of faith; when they proceed to answer objections, or to shew its *sanctifying* tendency, *imperceptibly*, and doubtless *unintentionally*, slide into quite another view of faith: and then it becomes very easy to make the cause appear specious; nor do most readers bestow sufficient pains to detect the latent fallacy, or to become so conversant in such subjects, as to be capable of exactly discriminating between them. The author, however, is confident, that his arguments, if duly weighed and compared with Scripture, will be found conclusive; and fully prove, that *saving faith is a holy exercise of the soul.*

SECTION V.

Saving Faith the principle of all holy affections, words, and works.

THE *holy nature* of true faith may likewise be inferred, with absolute certainty, from the effects produced by it: for "a corrupt tree cannot bring forth "good fruit;" and "every tree is known by its "fruit."—Faith, when genuine, excites all holy affections, and works by them in all holy obedience. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not "seen as yet, moved *with fear*, prepared an ark."—Sinners, when warned to flee from the wrath to come, if they believe the warning, are *moved with fear* to forsake their sinful courses and unscriptural confidences; and when they have been instructed in the gospel, if they believe the gracious message, they are moved "to flee for refuge to lay hold on the *hope* set "before them." Even confirmed disciples are repeatedly warned, "not to fear them that kill the body, "and after that have no more that they can do; but "to fear Him who is able to destroy both body and "soul in hell."* "Blessed is he that feareth always."

* Matt. x. 28. Luke xii. 4, 5.

" Be not high minded, but *fear*." " Let us there-
" fore *fear*, lest a promise being left us of entering
" into his rest, any of you should seem to come short
" of it." " Let us have grace to serve God, with re-
" verence and godly *fear;* for our God is a con-
" suming Fire." In proportion to the degree, in which we understand and believe these words, we shall be moved with *fear*, to use proper means, and flee to a distance from the danger: for " a prudent
" man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself, but the
" simple pass on and are punished." And this fear implies reverence of the authority and justice of God, hope in his mercy, and a desire of his favour and the happiness that he bestows; which implies love of his excellencies, as well as dread of his awful power and indignation.

But the highest and purest energy of Faith consists in calling forth *holy love* into vigorous exercise; and by its powerful influence constraining the believer to all devoted and self-denying obedience, and patient suffering for the Lord's sake. Indeed *this* will be perceived, by those who well consider the subject, to comprise every thing: for *love* is the leading affection of the soul, and governs all others.—When therefore the apostle would mark, in few words, the essential distinction between a christian and all other men, he says, " In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth
" any thing, nor uncircumcision, but *faith which*
" *worketh by love*."* Now " love is the fulfilling of
" the law," and likewise the principal fruit of the

* Gal. v. 6, 13, 14.

Spirit; God is LOVE, and heaven is love: and can a faith not at all *holy* excite in us the most *holy* and *spiritual* of all exercises of the rational soul?—I say *excite*, not *produce:* for in strict propriety, the *production* of every holy thing must be ascribed entirely to the Holy Spirit; and faith could not possibly work by holy love, if the heart continued unregenerate, and in a state of enmity against God.

The views, which saving faith gives the soul of those objects that revelation brings to our knowledge, are suited to call forth the most lively exercises of love to Christ, and the most delightful admiration of his glorious excellencies, and his compassion to lost sinners: they will excite also an ardent desire after the nearest union and communion with him, a decided preference of his favour to all earthly objects, a fear of coming short of this highest privilege and advantage, gratitude proportioned to our hope, zeal for his glory, attachment to his cause, and a peculiar regard to all which stands related to him or bears his image. This love of Christ is *substantially* the same with the love of God: for we sinners know, approach, believe, trust, love, and honour the Father, only in his beloved Son. The same exercises of faith call forth our love to our brethren, and to all men, according to the precepts and example of our beloved Redeemer: and thus *faith working by love* manifests itself in all godliness, righteousness, temperance, kindness, and beneficence. Even repentance, in all its exercises to the end of life, is excited by a *belief of the divine testimony* in one way or other; while some degree of true repentance

is necessary to explicit faith in Christ. In proportion to the increase and vigour of living faith, will be the growth and ardour of all holy affections, and our persevering fruitfulness in all real good works. The more clearly and constantly the believer contemplates a crucified Saviour, and scripturally relies on him with earnest application of heart for all the blessings of salvation; the more humble, spiritual, obedient, zealous, loving, harmless, pure, self-denying, and actively beneficent will he be.

And the reason of this is, because true faith, springing from regeneration, co-exists in the heart with all other gracious dispositions: and evidencing to the soul one part of divine truth after another, as circumstances require and occasions are given, it excites them all by turns into more vigorous and sensible exercise. It is, however, an *unedifying curious speculation* to dispute which of them *in order of time* has the priority: seeing "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," quickening the sinner who had been dead in sin, is at once the Author and Source of them all. The varied experiences of different persons, with the numberless undiscoverable, and generally unnoticed, circumstances, which cause some first to attend to one, and some to another, of the feelings of their own minds, will certainly lead them to different and even contrary determinations, according to the schemes of doctrine which they severally adopt.

It is very commonly stated, that 'faith purifies the heart:' but the language of Scripture is more accurate:—namely, that "God purifieth the heart by

"faith."* Having enabled the sinner, by his new-creating grace, cordially to believe the gospel; by the varied actings of that faith he excites every holy affection; and as these prevail an gather strength, all unholy desires and propensities are dethroned, hated, mortified, and gradually abolished. In entire agreement with this, yet taking another view of the subject, the apostle Peter says, "Seeing ye have purified your "souls, in *obeying the truth, through the Spirit*, unto "unfeigned love of the brethren; seeing that ye love "one another with a pure heart fervently."† They were active in this *purifying of their souls;* but it was effected by obeying the truth; and this was done by the grace of the Holy Spirit. For "The fruit of the "Spirit is love." No man, who scripturally holds the doctrine of regeneration, will ascribe the "puri-"fying of the heart" to faith, as to its *efficient cause;* but faith is the *spiritual organ of sight and perception*, through which invisible things are so shewn to the soul by the Holy Spirit, as to effect, through his continual agency, a gradual renovation. Faith (being itself the gift of God and the operation of the Spirit,) seeks and receives those heavenly influences, by which the seeds of universal holiness, sown in regeneration, spring forth and grow to maturity: according to the declaration of St. Paul; We all, "with open "face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, "are changed into the same image from glory to "glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord;" and thus we are gradually purified from the remainder of

* Acts xv. 9. † Pet. i. 22.

our proud, carnal, and selfish passions and propensities.

Similar to this is the language of St. John, "This "is the love of God, that we keep his command- "ments, and his commandments are not grievous. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the "world; and this is the victory that overcometh the "world, even our *faith*. Who is he that overcometh "the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the "Son of God?" The apostle ascribes these *effects*, of *loving God, keeping his commandments, and overcoming the world*, to the faith of those who are *born of God;* and he evidently speaks of this *faith as essential to that which is born of God.* Such a faith, working by holy love, gives the soul a decided victory over the love of worldly objects, the fear of men, a false shame and regard to character, and every carnal and selfish principle; and it thus renders obedience not only practicable, but delightful. Thus St. Paul exclaims, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the "cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world "is crucified to me, and I unto the world."*

He also shews us that all the self-denying, courageous, and zealous obedience of the Old Testament saints sprang from faith, as its immediate source. "*By* "*faith* Enoch walked with God." "*By faith* Abra- "ham obeyed."—and "offered Isaac." "*By faith* "Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's "daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with "the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of

* Gal. vi. 14.

" sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ " greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he " had respect unto the recompence of reward. *By* " *faith* he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the " king; for he endured, as seeing him who is invisi- " ble." Let any sober and pious mind determine whether the judgment, choice, and purpose of faith, in these cases, was not spiritual and holy.—In many instances, the particular exercise of faith, to which the obedience is ascribed, was entirely *distinct* from reliance on Christ for salvation: but even here faith had the same general nature; it cordially received the testimony of God, and in his prescribed way expected the performance of the promises, from his divine mercy, power, and faithfulness; and had reference to the predicted Messiah, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. The same faith, which interested these ancient servants of God in Christ for justification, influenced them to render the promptest obedience in the most difficult circumstances: and it is observable, that the same actions, which the apostle ascribes to *faith* as their principle, are elsewhere spoken of as the result and evidence of other holy dispositions. " By faith Abraham, when he was tried, " offered up Isaac." " By this I know that thou " *fearest* God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, " thine only son, from me."*

The words of the Lord Jesus to the apostle of the Gentiles, shew the holy nature, as well as the sanctifying efficacy, of true faith " I send thee to them, to

* Heb. xi. 17. Gen. xxii. 12.

" open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to " light, and from the power of Satan unto God; *that* " *they may receive forgiveness of sins*, and inheritance " among them that are *sanctified*, *by faith* that is in " me." This commission the apostle executed, by " shewing that men should repent, and turn to God, " and do works meet for repentance:"* and certainly it implies, that sinners are illuminated, and converted unto God, *in order* to their forgiveness and not *in consequence* of it. And as sanctification is here ascribed to the efficacy of *faith* in Christ, so our Lord elsewhere says, " Sanctify them *by thy truth;* thy word " is truth."† Holy truth alone can be the seed of holiness in the soul: " the good seed is the word of the " kingdom;" but tares produce tares; and *an honest and good heart* is the only ground, in which that seed takes root, springs up, and brings forth fruit; or a holy faith alone can so receive the holy truth, as to use it in progressive sanctification. Dropping the metaphor, Christ had before said to the eleven, " Now " ye are *clean*, through the word which I have spoken " unto you:"‡ Thus our Lord, while Judas was present, said to the apostles, " Ye are clean but not all:" yet after the traitor was gone, he said to the eleven " Now ye are clean through the word I have spoken " to you." But it is evident, that Judas had heard the same word as the other apostles; and also that his faith differed from theirs more in his manner of believing, than in the doctrines which he believed.

Indeed every thing holy in the hearts and lives of

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* Acts xxvi. 17—20. † John xvii. 17. ‡ John xv. 3.

sinners, (except regeneration,) is ascribed in the Scripture to the energy of faith. Christians *live by faith, stand by faith, walk by faith, obey by faith, fight the good fight of faith, overcome the world by faith*, and "are kept by the power of God, *through* "*faith*, unto salvation."—The *shield of faith* is one principal part of our spiritual armour; and as all other parts of this panoply of God denote things of a holy nature; why should faith alone be deemed an exception? Or are we justified by one kind of faith, and do we fight our enemies by another?—We read of "the "work of faith, the labour of love, and the patience "of hope;" but who can imagine, that the apostle meant a *holy love*, a *holy hope*, and an *unholy faith*? "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk "ye in him," (that is, by the same kind of faith;) "rooted and built up in him, and established in the "faith, as ye have been taught."*

It has been repeatedly observed, that true faith, by receiving the sure testimony of God appropriates the information he bestows, on those most important subjects, concerning which unbelief must remain in ignorance, or be left to uncertain reasonings and conjectures.—It is therefore a real act of faith to believe on this sure testimony, that "the wicked shall be "turned into hell, and all the people that forget God:" that "We cannot serve God and Mammon:" and that "No whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor "covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheri- "tance in the kingdom of Christ and of God; let no

* Col. ii. 6, 7.

" man deceive you with vain words, for because of " these things cometh the wrath of God upon the " children of disobedience." If then a person be actually living in the practice of any of these iniquities, and yet think himself a justified person because of his creed and experience; his confidence is the result of direct *unbelief*, and expressly treats the plain testimony of God as a lie!

It is indeed a distinct act of faith to believe that " Jesus is the Son of God;" that " he died for our " sins, and rose again for our justification;" and that " he is able to save to the uttermost all them that " come to God by him; seeing he ever liveth to make " intercession for them." But it would be very absurd to suppose, that these divine testimonies contradict those before mentioned; or that any man truly believed the one, while he directly disbelieved the other! When therefore a sinner is brought truly to believe those declarations of Scripture, which shew his real state and character; he is prepared to believe also those truths, which relate to Christ and his salvation, and will certainly seek to him for deliverance from sin as well as from condemnation. This is properly *faith in Christ*, and it is immediately connected with *justification:* but it implies the belief of all other truths contained in the sacred oracles, as far as they are understood and seen to be there revealed. Such of these as relate to the perfections, authority, and glory of God, with our relations and accountableness to him, the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, a future judgment, and eternal happiness or misery; when set before the soul by that " faith, which

" is the evidence of things not seen," are suited to call forth awful reverential fear of God, and of his holy heart-searching presence, dread of his wrath, regard to his will, sorrow for sin, humiliation, and abhorrence of evil. The realizing belief of those truths, which more especially relate to the gospel, is equally calculated to excite a lively hope of mercy; a purifying, establishing, yea *triumphant*, expectation of heavenly felicity: ardent longings after spiritual blessings, counterbalanced with jealous fears of coming short of them; admiring, adoring, grateful love; zeal for the honour of God, and the success of true religion; proportionable disregard to temporal interests or losses, pains or pleasures, honour or dishonour; unfeigned and fervent love of our brethren and neighbours, and even of our most embittered enemies; and still deeper self-abasement and hatred of all sin.

These affections, when vigorous and permanent, and connected with a firm dependence on the promises of the new covenant, and maintained by " com-" munion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus " Christ," through the influences of the Holy Spirit, are fully adequate to the ends for which they were intended; and cannot but impel and even *constrain* the lively believer to the most self-denying and devoted obedience, and the most persevering patience in suffering for the sake of Christ and the gospel. Hence originated all those extraordinary actions of zealous obedience, courageous firmness, and unwearied endurance, which the Scriptures record, and which have appeared in the character and conduct of saints and martyrs in every age of the church. And upon dili-

gent and patient investigation it will be found, that *this view of faith* consolidates, as it were, and harmonizes, the whole of what the oracles of God teach us on these subjects; so that precepts, doctrines, promises, threatenings, exhortations, invitations, cautions, and delineations of character, all here meet in full agreement.

Man is justly condemned for breaking the holy and good law of his Creator, and for being an enemy to him in his heart. The way of reconciliation and recovery is provided in Emmanuel's Person and redemption, to the praise of the glory of God. All who truly believe are fully pardoned and justified, and shall be eternally saved: this faith is the effect of regeneration, and results from *spiritual life;* it implies true repentance in its very essence; it works by love of God and man; it purifies the heart and overcomes the world; it gradually forms the character, regulates the temper and passions, influences the words and actions, and thus, through the continued agency of the Holy Spirit, renders the believer fruitful and zealous in all good works.

" In Christ Jesus nothing availeth, but faith that " worketh by love;"—" nothing availeth but a new " creature."—" Circumcision is nothing, and uncir- " cumcision is nothing; but the keeping of the com- " mandments of God."* According to the view given above, these several propositions perfectly coincide. The *new creature* exercises *faith that worketh by love;* and " this is the love of God that we keep his com-

* 1 Cor. vii. 19. Gal. v. 6. vi. 15.

" mandments, and his commandments are not griev-
" ous." " He" says the divine Saviour, " that hath my
" commandments and keepeth them; he it is that lov-
" eth me." " Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever
" I command you." " And this is my command-
" ment, that ye love one another as I have loved you."
And St. John says, " This commandment have we
" from him, that he who loveth God love his brother
" also."

If St. James says, " Faith *without works is dead;*"
St. Paul plainly teaches that no faith availeth, except
that *which worketh by love.* And when the former
enquires, " Was not Abraham our father justified by
" works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the
" altar?" he answers his own question by adding,
" Seest thou how faith wrought by his works, and by
" works was faith made perfect: and the Scripture
" was fulfilled which saith, Abraham *believed God and*
" *it was accounted to him for righteousness,* and he
" was called the friend of God."*

The question to be resolved, in the decision of
every man's doom at the day of judgment, according
to numerous Scriptures, must be this, ' Was he a
' believer in Christ or not?'—If any one profess faith
in Christ, it will be enquired, ' Whether his faith
' were living or dead?' ' Whether or not it wrought
' by love of Christ, and of his brethren for Christ's
' sake?' As a man's actions, *when the whole shall*
be disclosed, determine this point, so will his sen-
tence be: while the degree of the unbeliever's

* James ii. 14—26.

guilt will fix the measure of his punishment; and the believer will be graciously recompensed in proportion to his fruitfulness. This seems to elucidate and harmonize all the representations given us of this infinitely momentous concern. The holy Judge himself hath solemnly warned his professed disciples on this all-important subject, when with unspeakable dignity he declares, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, "Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but "he that doeth the will of my Father which is in hea-"ven.—Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, "Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy "name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many "wonderful works? And then will I profess unto you, I "never knew you, Depart from me ye that work ini-"quity. *Therefore* whosoever heareth these sayings "of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a "wise man, which built his house upon a rock. And "the rain descended, and the floods came, and the "winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell "not; for it was founded upon a rock. And every one "that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them "not, shall be likened unto a foolish man which built "his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, "and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat "upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of "it." *The wise man* doubtless is the true christian; his faith is living and obedient; thus he builds aright on the only sure Foundation, and raises a permanent structure, which all the storms of life and death shall assail in vain. But many *foolish men*, professing to build on the tried Foundation, which God hath laid,

are either misled by erring guides, or mistake the instructions and slight the warnings of *wise master-builders:* thus they deceive themselves with notions, and with a dead faith; their presumptuous confidence and disobedient profession will make way for the awful fall of their fair but baseless edifice, in the great decisive day; and unutterable astonishment, anguish, and despair will seize upon them, when the frowning Judge shall leave them speechless, while with an awful frown he will say, "I never knew you, Depart from me, all ye workers "of iniquity."

Whether therefore, we consider the Author and Origin of *saving faith*, its invariable attendants, its essential nature, or its distinguishing effects, we find unanswerable proof that it is a *holy* exercise of the rational soul; that it has its special seat in the *heart;* that it receives the light of heavenly truth in holy love; and that it employs that light to invigorate and call forth into action all spiritual affections, and to render the believer "holy in all manner of conversation." But if each view of saving faith, considered separately, demonstrate its holy nature: how powerful and overbearing is the evidence, when we collect all these converging rays into one focus, and estimate the force of these several arguments united together! If this do not convince the reader; but he will yet contend that justifying faith is the mere assent of the understanding partially enlightened, and the reluctant consent of an unhumbled unholy heart, as terrified by the report of vengeance, to sue for mercy of which it feels no real need; and yet that this selfish unholy faith sanctifies the soul, and produces most excellent fruit in the life! Or

that true faith is neither the one, nor the other of these, but something between that can neither be defined nor described; he must retain his opinion, and be left as inaccessible to argument. Some may indeed question, whether he do not verge to the *honest* but *absurd* exclamation of an ancient zealot, ' *Credo quia impossibile est:*' (I believe, *because* it is impossible:) and, whatever favourable opinion we may form of his heart, we must again affirm that it is *impossible* for him to " give a *rea-* " *son* of the hope that is in him."—But if any one, allowing in general the truth of those things that have been stated concerning saving faith, should yet feel some hesitation about the use of the word *holy* in this connexion: the author will hold no controversy with him on this point. Provided the essential and unspeakably important distinction between *living and dead faith* were unreservedly allowed, and given its due *prominence* in the views and discourses of christians and ministers; the rest would be in great measure a verbal controversy, from which every wise man would turn to more pleasant and profitable employments.

SECTION VI.

Some Reasons assigned for insisting on the holy Nature of saving Faith.

IT may probably be enquired by the reader, why we bestow so much pains to prove the holy nature of saving faith; seeing we allow that the sinner makes no use of this holiness as an encouragement, and indeed seldom notices it, in his first applications to Christ for salvation? To this question I would answer,

I. It is in order to induce christians, and especially ministers, to use the scriptural method of preventing men from deceiving themselves. It will be found at the great decisive day, that nothing has more conduced to quiet nominal christians in impenitence and unbelief, than a groundless persuasion that they do indeed repent and believe. The laboured arguments therefore, of the preceding pages are not so much intended for the use of newly awakened persons, as for more established christians: and especially for those who, by office or in charity, instruct and converse frequently with persons thus circumstanced. Indeed discussions on such topicks cannot be fully understood, except by those " who by reason of use have their

" senses exercised to discern good and evil:" and of course they are generally improper for the new-born babe. But the instructions publickly or privately given to enquirers, will accord to the sentiments and judgment of real christians, and especially those of the pastors of the Lord's flock: whatever therefore tends to a sound understanding of Scripture, among those who already believe the gospel, will conduce to prevent self-deception in others, when first entering on a religious profession. And *prevention* is almost our only hope: for the most able and experienced ministers have agreed, that the undeceiving of one, whom Satan has soothed into a false peace by an unsound profession of the gospel, is a thing which very seldom occurs.

It is commonly indeed answered, that 'many will deceive themselves, however we state and explain the doctrine of faith:' but surely we should dread, as the most awful calamity, being in any degree accessory to the destructive delusion! And if we do not dread it *on their account;* we have proportionable need *to be alarmed on our own*, lest " their blood should be re- " quired at our hands." Even when the good seed, unmingled with tares, is sown; the deceitfulness and wickedness of the heart, the wiles of the tempter, and the fascinations of the world, will influence many to " speak peace to themselves, when there is no peace:" but " while *the servants slept* the enemy sowed the " tares;" and all their subsequent vigilance could not eradicate them; for these " children of the wicked " one" must be left intermixed with true believers till the harvest. Some good men indeed, in their

earnestness to gather up the tares, have endangered the wheat, and "offended against the generation of "God's children:" but may not vigilance and caution be used by way of prevention, without the least danger of that kind?

If we do not, in the most *careful* and *explicit* manner, explain what we mean by *salvation*, and by *faith;* Satan will prevail with men to catch at peace and comfort prematurely, and to use our words for this purpose: and thus we shall incur the charge of "healing "their hurt deceitfully," by "speaking peace when "there is no peace." Men are exceedingly apt to conclude, even when the utmost caution is used in stating the doctrines of the gospel, that exemption from punishment and a title to future happiness constitute the whole of *salvation;* and that confidence in Christ to save them from wrath and bring them to heaven, though they do not concur in other respects with the design of his incarnation and mediation, is *faith in him.* And if they once get so thoroughly possessed of these notions, through our inaccuracy and incautious language, as to quiet their consciences by them: whenever we afterwards insist on the fruits of faith, and its sanctifying effects in holy tempers and good works; they will (not altogether without reason,) charge us with inconsistency; and meet with numbers to encourage them in exclaiming against all these exhortations, as *legal*, and as tending to bring them into bondage.—So that while it is allowed that many, who give a very different description of faith from that which is here maintained, bestow much pains to guard their doctrine from abuse, and clearly

shew that *true faith* always produces holiness: it is also asserted that in these attempts, they deviate from their own previous definition of faith, and substitute another idea in its place. True believers are doubtless holy in proportion to the degree of their faith: and if their *hope* be scriptural, the more *assured* it is, the more "stedfast, unmoveable, and earnestly abounding in the work of the Lord," they will certainly be found. But we enquire, whether many do not "think themselves something when they are nothing; "and so deceive themselves?" Whether many, who disclaim good works, do not satisfy their minds with visionary impulses, enthusiastical raptures, and a change of creed: though strangers to that *holy* calling of which the apostle spoke?* Whether there be not a *dead* faith as well as a *living* faith? Whether the former be not often more confident than the latter? Whether there be not a groundless presumption, as well as "a hope that maketh not ashamed?" And whether an unholy faith and confidence can be *sanctifying?* It is true that several of the persons, to whom these questions are proposed, are completely exculpated from all *intention* to loosen the believer's obligation to obedience: but good men may *endorse* and give currency to bad bills; and thus *incautiously* aid the dishonest to defraud their unsuspecting neighbours. Nor let it be forgotten, that we can only judge of the *tendency of the doctrine*, and are not at all required to decide on the *intention of the teacher*.

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* 2 Tim. i. 9.

Shrewd men of corrupt minds, such "as privily "bring in damnable heresies," "teaching things "which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake," or from ambition and love of popularity, will avail themselves of every expression in the works of respectable writers, which can be made to serve their pernicious purposes. They will detach them from their connexion, explain them in their own way, and draw such inferences from them, as the Authors of them most heartily abhorred: and this especially after they are dead, and cannot explain themselves. And superficial readers or hearers, who want a cheap opiate to quiet conscience, will be emboldened, by a name of established reputation, to drink the fatal poison. The book whence the passage is quoted, and which, if fairly consulted, would furnish an antidote, is meanwhile neglected; and thus "Satan, transformed into "an angel of light," deceives the soul of the unwary.

Even while the apostles were alive, it was needful to guard professed christians against being "deceived "by vain words:" nay, "men of perverse minds" distorted the very language of inspiration to bring on others and "on themselves, swift destruction." We ought therefore to be extremely circumspect, not "to "give occasion to those that seek occasion:" and we are expressly commanded to "gather up the stumb-"ling-blocks out of the way" of those who enquire after salvation. The enemy, will, if possible, sow tares; he will do it while we sleep, by his own servants: but his triumph is in this respect complete, when he can prevail with the ministers of Christ to

mix tares with the wheat, which they sow in their Master's field.

If it has then been proved that saving faith is a holy exercise of the soul, it is certainly of the greatest importance that this should be clearly understood; and that the servants of the Lord should be fully aware of the consequences which result from a contrary representation, and even from incautious and unguarded expressions on the subject. Without embarrassing *enquirers* by distinctions which they cannot possibly understand; if a *holy faith* were constantly described in its nature and effects, and a *holy salvation* uniformly set before our auditories; and if men were earnestly cautioned to beware of counterfeits, awakened persons would be far less liable to be deceived by *a dead faith into vain confidence*, than they are when such precautions are neglected. Without directly adverting to their own case, they would thus be imperceptibly formed to an habitual conviction, that salvation from wrath is inseparably connected with salvation from sin; and that true faith receives Christ in his whole character, and in all his offices, with cordial approbation and gratitude; and is in these respects widely different from a mere assent of the understanding to the doctrines of the gospel.

II. We insist on this subject thus earnestly, for the sake of such *as are without*. If men take offence at the real gospel of Christ, they alone are answerable for it: but if we state thing unscripturally, and so needlessly stumble and prejudice them, we become accessary to their destruction. Now, *they that are without* are liable to be stumbled in various ways by

the subject before us. The *doctrine of salvation of free grace, through faith alone, by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, and an interest in his atonement, and not in any sense by our own works*, is sufficiently offensive to the pride and carnal enmity of man's heart, and entirely contrary to all his vain reasonings and imaginations. This cannot be avoided; and we ought not to keep back, or modify, any part of the truth, to render it more palatable. But it must tend exceedingly to increase the prejudices of worldly men against the gospel, (especially those of the more moral, sensible, and respectable among them,) if we maintain *that saving faith is not holy in its nature; that it precedes repentance, and completely justifies the man, who to that moment has been destitute of godly sorrow for sin, and every degree of a disposition to amend his life; and that he is actually reconciled to God, as pardoned, accepted, and received to full favour, before he begins to repent or to do works meet for repentance!* Yet all this and much more to the same purpose may be *collected* from the scattered passages, contained in the writings of those who have espoused this cause; and not merely *inferred* from their principles! Worldly men will not annex our appropriate ideas to the expressions which we use: but they will generally put the least favourable construction on them of which they are capable, and then draw their own conclusions. Indeed facts demonstrate, that numbers, viewing Christianity only at a distance, are set against the gospel by those distorted representations of it, for which some pious men zealously contend! Many know enough of the Scriptures to perceive, that the

doctrines of Christianity are there stated very differently, from what they hear or read in the discourses of several among those, who almost exclusively bear the title of *evangelical.* And being satisfied that some of their sentiments are unscriptural, their dislike to the whole plan of the gospel shelters itself under that conviction: and supposing that they are only averse to the *errors* of the system, which *in all respects they really dislike;* they adhere to their own forms and notions with more decided self-congratulation. Others, on the contrary, perceiving that the doctrines justly called *evangelical*, are certainly contained in the Scriptures, and hearing such exceptionable inferences drawn from them, hastily conclude, according to the dictates of a proud and carnal heart, that Christianity is chargeable with the whole, and that such a religion cannot be from God! Thus they are prepared to hearken to the insinuations of infidels; who are more indebted for their success to the follies and vices of professed christians, than to the strength of their own arguments, or even their zealous efforts to promote the desperate cause.

Some individuals, who now preach the gospel, have declared, that after they had received serious impressions, they were long prejudiced by these things, and could not receive the doctrines of grace exactly as proposed, even by those of reputation among the evangelical people with whom they were acquainted. This has occasioned many doubts and delays, and exposed them to divers temptations; till a nearer view of the subject convinced them, that the opinions to which they objected had no foundation in Scripture,

and were not in reality connected with the doctrines in question.

It would probably be found, upon careful enquiry, that this consideration has not its due weight among us. In conversation one with another, we speak of the reception with which our sentiments meet among our *friends* and *favourers*, and the *good* supposed to be done: but do not enough consider what impression is made on occasional hearers, or readers, who are strangers to our system, or prejudiced against it. Perhaps, in some instances, thousands are rendered more determined in their aversion to the gospel, by the *reverberated* and *enhanced* report of some *crude and unscriptural tenet*, or some *light and ludicrous* expression, which *injudicious* friends most extravagantly applauded, and fancied very useful.

It has been above observed, that when respectable persons adopt unscriptural sentiments, or use terms fairly capable of an ill construction, men of another character will go still further. They will leave the general doctrine unexplained and unguarded, or explain it in the worst sense: they will draw their own conclusions, and make their own use of it; and thus propagate a spurious gospel, by the authority of reputable names. In the mean time sensible and discerning men, who dislike the doctrines of grace, but take merely a distant and exterior view of the heterogeneous multitude, which, in one form or other, profess them, have their prejudices exceedingly increased, and even *justified* to their own consciences, by the wild and extravagant sentiments thus disseminated in the church. And, as if this were only a small

matter, too many, alas, both of teachers and disciples, fairly reduce their principles to practice! In domestick life, or in the intercourse of society, individuals of this sort disgust numbers by their religious cant, their extravagant notions, and their palpable violation of all established rules of moral and relative duty. Hence scandals and prejudices are multiplied and riveted; and the opposers of the gospel, some erroneously, others maliciously, charge all these absurdities and iniquities on the whole body of those, who zealously contend for evangelical truth!

The fatal consequences of these things absolutely baffle all the powers of calculation. "Woe be to the "world because of offences: for it must needs be that "offences come; but *woe unto that man* by whom "the offence cometh!!" This solemn warning of our Saviour and Judge should render us very circumspect, and careful to keep at a distance from every word and action, which may thus stumble and offend observers, and help to rivet the chains of darkness on an unbelieving world. On the other hand nothing can more powerfully tend to prevent or counteract these evils, than clear and explicit instructions concerning the nature of salvation, of faith, and of holiness; and making it evidently appear, that while we preach the doctrines of free grace, we abhor both antinomian principles and practices, and that our instructions are incompatible with all these hateful abuses, and can by no rules of fair interpretation be possibly made to bear such a construction.

III. The holy nature of saving faith is thus earnestly contended for, in order to encourage weak and

trembling believers. The author is well aware, that numbers will be startled at the very mention of this reason; as it is the ground on which they proceed in stating the subject in a widely different manner; but he is confident, that on an impartial investigation it will be found universally true, that the scriptural method of preventing self-deception, and of protesting against every abuse of the gospel, is also the most effectual way of comforting the broken in heart; except as previous mistakes and prejudices render them regardless of these instructions. The greater part of the *doubts* and *fears*, to which the humble and upright are liable, do not arise from apprehensions that Christ is either unable or unwilling to save the true believer, in any case whatever; but from a *suspicion that they themselves are not true believers.* They read in the Scriptures, (whether they hear it from their pastors or not,) that numbers deceive themselves; that Satan transformed into an angel of light deceive multitudes; that many deceivers are gone forth into the world; and that "if it were possible they would deceive the very "elect." They see many turn aside whom they have looked up to, as far more advanced in religion than themselves; they are conscious of very much amiss in their hearts and in their best duties; they do not exactly know what those "things are which accompany "salvation," or the nature of that "holiness without "which no man shall see the Lord." From these combined causes, they are frequently led to expect such grounds of personal confidence, as are unattainable, or to prize those which are of no value when attained; while they overlook that state of the heart, and

those experiences which are infallible evidences of reconciliation to God. *Persons of this character*, whatever doctrine they may read or hear, or however imperfect their views may be, cannot rest satisfied without some *special evidence*, that their faith and hope essentially differ from the dead faith and presumption of self-deceivers; or without explicitly understanding in what that difference consists. Unless, therefore, they be clearly instructed in these points, they scarcely ever arrive at stable peace and permanent satisfaction as to the event. Hence it often happens, that almost their whole lives are occupied in fruitless endeavours to rise superior to their anxious fears, and in using one *recipe* after another to keep up a confidence of safety, without knowing on what to rest it. Thus all their earnestness is diverted into a wrong channel; and, though possessed of real love to God and man, they have little heart to improve their talents in active services, through ceaseless perplexity about their personal safety.

There is indeed a description of professors of the gospel, who, by the help of a hard heart and an unfeeling conscience, easily buoy up themselves into a confidence that all is well, and dream sweetly on the very brink of destruction. But whatever *we* may say or do, such as know the worth of their souls, and the import of the word ETERNITY, with the manifold danger of fatal delusion in this infinitely momentous concern, will be cautious and suspicious even to excess; and this will be the case in proportion as their views are defective or erroneous, and the opinions of those whom they revere are wavering and undecided,

as to the proper ground of *hope* and *assurance*. For, let it here be observed, that we extremely *mistake* or *mis-state* the matter; if we do not clearly and explicitly distinguish between *the warrant of faith*, and *the ground of assured hope;* between *the encouragement given to the vilest that come unto Christ for salvation*, and *the subsequent full and authorized satisfaction, that they have come in a right manner*. To the former nothing but the word of truth is needful; but the sanctification, seal, and witness of the Holy Spirit *with their spirits*, according to the word of truth, are indispensably requisite to the latter.

Holiness primarily signifies conformity to the holy image and law of God: but if we duly advert to the circumstances of a fallen creature under a dispensation of mercy, and the peculiar nature of the gospel, we shall evidently perceive, that the beginnings of *holiness* in a regenerate soul must assume in some respects a different aspect, from the holiness of a creature that never sinned. Young converts and discouraged believers should, therefore, be taught especially to look for the evidences of their acceptance, in those *holy* dispositions which more directly belong to their situation. A broken and contrite heart, humiliation and sorrow for sin, with hatred and dread of it; willing renunciation of every kind of self-confidence and self-preference; cordial approbation of the humbling holy method of salvation proposed in the gospel; earnest desires after an interest in the atonement and righteousness of Christ; diligence in the means of grace: susceptibility of keen distress from fear of coming short of this blessing; suitable dispositions and

affections towards the Saviour, his people, cause, ordinances, and precepts; tenderness of conscience, manifested in willing obedience, and ingenuous grief and shame, on account of the defect, and defilements of their obedience; these, I say, are the peculiar exercises of holiness, to which the attention of such persons should be directed in self-examination.—Were our hearers constantly and clearly taught, that the human heart, when left to itself, is altogether proud, carnal, enmity to God and his law, and disposed to hate, despise or make a licentious use of his gospel; and that the unregenerate can only have a selfish unholy religion, in one form or other; and were the holy nature of salvation, and of genuine faith, fully explained, and distinguished from unscriptural views of them: the upright and humble would perceive some degree of *holiness* in their lowest depressions and most discouraging experiences, when they reviewed them in a calmer season by the light of divine truth. Thus their sighs and tears for past sins; their dread of relapsing into the evils in which they once lived without remorse; their painful and persevering, though often unsuccessful, opposition to violent temptations, and corrupt propensities strengthened by long bad habits; and their anxious dread lest the Saviour should reject them, or Satan deceive them, (about which they were once wholly unconcerned,) would be conclusive proofs that a blessed change had passed upon their souls. They would then clearly perceive, that every acting of *real faith in Christ*, every *sincere desire* after the complete salvation of the gospel, is above nature, and contrary to nature, in its present fallen condition. By

degrees they would learn to distinguish the precious from the vile in their own experiences and affections; and to judge of gold and alloy by the *essential qualities* of each, and not by the size or glitter of the mass. They would find a measure of that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord," in their consciousness of heartily "submitting to his righteousness," and supremely valuing his salvation; as well as in cheerful unreserved obedience to his commands, from love to his name and gratitude for his mercies.—*Purity of heart* would be discerned in their abhorrence of sin, and the anguish of still feeling its detested influence, interrupting and defiling every devotional service or act of obedience; notwithstanding all their watchfulness, persevering prayers for complete deliverance, and constant opposition to its first risings in the soul. For what can so fully prove our hearts *pure*, while any sin remains in them, as habitual abhorrence of that sin? sorrow and bitterness on account of it, and earnest desires for its extirpation? Once these same evils reigned in undisturbed dominion: but as there was nothing contrary to them in the temper of the heart, they were scarcely noticed, and gave very little uneasiness. Then we were wholly *impure in heart*, though prone to boast of the *goodness of our hearts:* but now that we feel, detest, and lament our sinfulness; and groan being burdened on account of these inward evils; we are become in a measure *pure in heart*, and shall in due season be made perfectly holy.

The love of the soul to God, likewise may be as certainly recognized, in the sinner's mourning after him, in his grief for having offended or dishonoured

him, longing for the tokens of his reconciled love, and with patient persevering diligence, seeking it in the appointed way; as in the higher exercises of delighting in God, rejoicing in hope, and with enlivened gratitude celebrating his praises and glorifying his name.

If then weak and trembling believers were directed to look to such things, as *infallible evidences of saving grace;* it would do unspeakably more towards comforting and establishing them, than reiterated exhortations and persuasions to take it for granted that they are safe, while they can discern no evidences of their safety. Indeed, to speak the truth plainly, the stress that is often laid upon *assurance of personal safety*, as almost, if not quite, essential to faith in Christ; and the *outcry made against evidences*, in our own experience and consciousness of sanctification, as *legal* and tending to self-righteousness, and to keep the soul in bondage; is exactly calculated to buoy up the confidence of self-deceived hypocrites, and to cast into deeper dejection those, who are already discouraged through weakness of faith, temptation, and manifold infirmities. For after all, no description of men whatever, actually satisfy themselves without *evidences* of some kind or other: and when such as the Scriptures continually insist upon are discarded, others are imperceptibly substituted. Thus a door is opened to a variety of enthusiastical impressions, dreams, visions, and other species of new revelation, to inform individuals that they are the children of God; while they either are strangers to, or overlook, the sanctification of the Spirit, with which God himself seals and distinguishes those who are reconciled to him by faith in

Christ Jesus. Nay, even *assurance* itself is often most absurdly made an *evidence* of saving faith! though nothing can possibly be more unattainable by the trembling discouraged believer. But, whatever other evidences a man may possess; if he do not love Christ and keep his commandments, he has no right to deem himself his disciple; if St. John be admitted as competent to decide the question: for he says expressly, "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep "his commandments. He that saith, I know him, "and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and "the truth is not in him."* Let those therefore, who deny *sanctification* to be the *proper*, and the *only decisive evidence of justification*, fairly meet this apostolical declaration, before they attempt to reply to any of our arguments on the subject.

The discouragement, to which the upright are exposed from *poring on evidences*, arises from their overlooking those beginnings of *sanctification*, which uniformly and inseparably accompany salvation; and judging of their state by such attainments as are peculiar to comparatively few of the whole multitude of believers, and to them only in the more advanced stages of their profession. The former they have, and could discern, were they but instructed to regard them as decisive: the latter they either have not, or they are incapable of ascertaining their existence.

It is of the greatest importance to the established peace and hope of believers, to distinguish accurately between the incipient holiness of a saint on earth,

* 1 John ii. 3, 4.

amidst all his conflicts and temptations; and the perfect holiness of an angel or a saint in glory. When this distinction is well understood, the deepest humiliation for detested and lamented defilements will not weaken a believer in discouragement, or lead him to conclude himself a hypocrite. He will in this manner be enabled to take the comfort of what the Lord hath done *in him* by his Spirit; as well as of what he hath done *for him* in the redemption of his Son: even while increasing knowledge and sensibility of conscience render him far more aware of his sinfulness, and far more grieved for it, than he formerly was. *Self-dissatisfaction* must be essential to the holiness of an imperfect creature: nay, the more he is enlightened and renewed, the more he delights in God and communes with him, and the more he loves and longs after holiness; the lower will he sink in humility of heart; and at last deem his humiliation, all things considered, lamentably defective.—This was the case with St. Paul. While he was unquestionably one of the most eminent believers on earth, he deemed himself "less than the least of all saints:" yet he never intimated a doubt, but that he was a saint; and had he been interrogated on the subject, would probably have considered his present lowly view of himself, contrasted with his former self-exaltation and self-complacency, when a persecuting Pharisee, as a most decisive evidence that he was "in Christ a new crea-"ture: so that old things were passed away, and be-"hold! all things were become new."

If self-abasement, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, constant application to Christ, with

believing reliance and earnest desire, for all the blessings of his new covenant, from unfeigned consciousness of our entire indigence and unworthiness, be not considered as real holiness; it must follow, that the more humble we become, the less we shall be able to rejoice in God: except we close our eyes to all those passages in the Scripture, which declare a new creation to good works, a spiritual mind, and the fruits of the Spirit, to be essential to a state of acceptance with God. For in that case, increasing humility would render us less capable of discerning, and less disposed to consider, these distinguishing effects of special grace: and how could we give God the glory of having made us to differ, if we could not, without pride perceive that we were actually made to differ? But if we admit that the things, above considered, constitute an important part of holiness, and are inseparably connected with all the rest; then indeed the life of faith will carry its own evidence along with it; except in seasons of peculiar darkness and temptation, when we cannot ascertain the real nature of our own desires and experiences. And at these times, we should come as sinners on the warrant of the *general invitations*, which after a while will again clear up our special interest in the *promises* made to believers.

If these things be not attended to, unestablished christians, when exhorted to "examine themselves "whether they be in the faith;" are exceedingly perplexed, and scarcely know how to set about it: and this perplexity is frequently increased by an indeterminate way of speaking concerning the sins of believers, which prevails both in books and sermons. The

language of the sacred oracles, concerning the *daring rebellions* of the Israelites, who, like *nominal* christians, were too generally mere formalists, is often accommodated, without much precision, to the *lamented sins* of true believers; and even unfeigned humility leads some excellent persons to mention their own experience in terms which may be misunderstood by carnal persons, (who wish to conclude that there is no essential difference betwixt themselves and pious christians,) to mean habitual and allowed transgression.—And thus, while "workers of iniquity" are emboldened in the confident hope of salvation, notwithstanding their wilful and unrepented crimes; discouraged and tempted believers are led to think themselves like Ahab, or Judas, or other reprobates mentioned in the Scripture; because, in some one particular, they seem to discern a faint similitude between a part of their conduct, and that of these hypocrites and apostates in ancient times.

No doubt the holiness of a real believer includes a disposition to love and delight in the whole law of God, to hate and forsake all sin, to practise all good works, and to aspire in all respects unto more perfect conformity to the divine image: and no *supposed* humiliation, experience, or reliance on the Saviour, can prove any one a true christian, who allows himself in known sin, or habitually neglects known duty. Yet the exercises of heart, above insisted on, are undoubtedly *holiness* in its root and seminal principle: and if weak and wavering believers were instructed to find the evidences of their safety, and the pledges of their felicity, in those things about which they are most con-

versant, and from which their distresses commonly arise; they would more speedily be brought to establishment. When this was done, they would have more leisure, composure, and encouragement, to study and practise all other duties, to "crucify," still further, "the flesh with its affections and lusts," to cultivate all those holy tempers in which they had been most defective, and to improve their talents to the glory of God and the benefit of mankind.

Even in "giving all diligence to add to our faith "virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge "temperance, and to temperance patience and to pa- "tience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, "and to brotherly kindness charity;"—in order to "make our calling and election sure;" it is of great importance to know the nature and value of those things which we have already received: and in all the subsequent experience of the most assured believer, his habitual judgment, affections, and state of mind, relative to Christ and his salvation, must concur with every other evidence, to preserve his confidence unwavering, that "he has passed from death unto life." It is, therefore, in all respects of the greatest moment, to the real christian's comfort, establishment, and fruitfulness, to possess a clear perception, that every acting of true faith implies a degree of genuine holiness, and evidences the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience.

These are the principal reasons, on account of which the holy nature of saving faith has been so strenuously contended for: and they are abundantly sufficient, provided the truth of the doctrine has been scripturally es-

tablished.—I shall therefore now release my reader, by earnestly requesting him to bestow some time and pains, in acquiring a clear and ready understanding of the following distinctions, which seem to me of vast importance in these discussions, viz.—The distinction between *a warrant to believe*, and *a disposition to believe;* between *a man's being spiritually alive and in part sanctified*, and *his knowing himself to be so:* between *the holy nature of faith*, and *the sinner's perception of that holiness, and taking encouragement from it in coming to Christ;* between *the promises absolutely made to true believers*, and *the invitations given to sinners, with those promises which imply exhortations and suppose a compliance with them;* between *a warrant to believe in Christ*, and *a confidence that we are believer's;* between *the believer's consciousness of sanctification, used as an evidence that his faith is living and justifying* and *a self-righteous dependence on something in ourselves as in a degree the meritorious ground of our acceptance:* and finally between *faith* and *hope; the full assurance of faith, and the full assurance of hope.*

I trust the serious enquirer will not deem these to be distinctions without a difference, or made in matters of small moment: and it appears to me, after many years assiduous and earnest investigation of this subject, more than any other in theology; that a want of due attention to these distinctions is a principal cause of that amazing diversity of opinion, and that unaccountable inconsistence and perplexity, which are observable in the conversation, sermons, and writings of many evangelical persons on this apparently plain and most important subject. But it will answer little

purpose to run them over; or even to allow that the things distinguished are really distinct, and that the distinctions are important; unless they be, one by one, deeply considered, compared with Scripture, and either deliberately rejected, or thoroughly applied to practical uses.

The last distinction mentioned, may perhaps require a little farther elucidation.—Men clearly understanding the system of the gospel, the harmony and just proportion of its parts, and its tendency and design, may be said to possess "the full assurance of "understanding."* When they cordially believe and embrace the gospel, they have *faith;* when this faith excludes all doubts concerning the truth of the gospel, and its sufficiency for every purpose for which it is given, and the eternal salvation of all real believers, they have the *full assurance of faith.* But they only possess *hope*, in proportion as they are satisfied that they themselves are true believers; nor have they the *full assurance of hope*, so long as they have any doubt concerning their own salvation.—*Assured faith* is every man's duty, to whom the gospel is proposed with suitable evidence; and accordingly every one is exhorted thus to believe:† but *assured hope* must be obtained and preserved by holy diligence, and cannot be the proximate duty of the impenitent, or even of the negligent. When the apostle "stood in doubt" of the Galatians, and told them that he saw cause to do so, was it not their duty to stand in doubt of themselves? But was it likewise

* Col. ii. 2. † Heb. x. 22.

their duty to question the truth of the gospel; or the power and willingness of Christ to save all that come to him?—Certainly not.

The author having found much establishment, in his own soul, even while passing through sharp conflicts and dark temptations, by attending to these distinctions; and having had the satisfaction of leading a considerable number of discouraged enquirers to establishment, and settled peace in the same way; cannot but earnestly recommend them to the candid attention of those who shall read this publication.—He allows that a considerable measure of close thinking is requisite to obtain a clear and distinct view of such subjects; and that they are not much suited to the taste of a *dissipated and superficial age*, in which the church is not a little infected with the disease most epidemical in the world; and also that there are persons who are scarcely capable of such investigations. But for these very reasons it becomes the more incumbent on intelligent and better educated christians, and especially on the pastors of the flock, to aim at proficiency in these studies. Clear ideas suggest perspicuous language: and the compact style of an argumentative discourse, when *dilated* in familiar conversation and constant instruction, may be rendered intelligible to plain people; at least the most useful part will thus make its way into the minds of those, who cannot understand the discourse itself.—Finally, truth is worth all the labour of digging out of the mine, though it be deep: and they who have leisure and ability should bestow pains to enrich their brethren as well as themselves; nor can the subject be better

closed than with the following important passage, "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide "my commandments with thee; so that thou incline "thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thy heart to un- "derstanding; yea if thou *criest after knowledge*, and "*liftest up thy voice for understanding;* if thou seek- "est her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid "treasures: then shalt thou understand the fear of the "LORD, and find the knowledge of God.—For the "LORD giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh "knowledge and understanding."*

* Prov. ii, 1—6.

A

TREATISE

ON

GROWTH IN GRACE,

WITH REFERENCE TO

ST. PAUL's PRAYER FOR THE PHILIPPIANS.

(PHIL. i. 9—11.)

Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. 2 Pet. iii. 18.

FIRST AMERICAN, FROM THE FOURTH ENGLISH EDITION.

The substance of this discourse was at first published, as an occasional sermon: and, though the author has bestowed some pains to give it the form of a treatise; he is aware that he has in a measure failed in the attempt, and that the style and manner of a sermon still predominate. But whatever be the form, he most cordially, after *many* years, sets his seal to the instruction: and he has neither health, spirits, nor leisure to new model it.

INTRODUCTION.

THE apostle Paul was evidently a man of strong passions and peculiar sensibility; and being by divine grace exceedingly filled with love to the Lord Jesus, and to the souls of men, his mind was affected with the most lively emotions of joy or sorrow, hope or fear, according to the tidings which he received from the churches with which he had any peculiar connexion. At one time he complains, that "he has no rest "in his flesh," "is filled with heaviness," and "can "no longer forbear;" and that "he writes out of "much affliction and anguish of heart, with many "tears:" at another, he declares, that "he is filled "with comfort, and is exceedingly joyful in all his "tribulation, being comforted by the faith of his be- "loved children; for now," says he, "we live, if ye "stand fast in the Lord." He seems indeed to intimate, that these were "things which concerned his "infirmities:" and doubtless this sanguine disposition requires much correction and regulation by divine grace; but, when it is thus tempered, and counterbalanced by proportionable humility, wisdom, patience, and disinterestedness, it may be considered as

the main spring of a minister's activity. And as these united qualifications certainly conduced very much to the apostle's extraordinary usefulness; so they render his epistles peculiarly interesting to us, in all our enquiries concerning the best method of promoting the enlargement and prosperity of the church, and the edification of the disciples of the Lord Jesus.

Among other peculiarities of his manner, it especially suits our present purpose to notice the animated glow of joy and affection, with which he addresses his christian brethren.—Thus, when writing to the Philippians, he abruptly breaks forth, "I thank my "God upon every remembrance of you; always in "every prayer of mine for you all, making request "with joy." From the same fulness of heart he afterwards adds, "Many walk of whom I have told "you often, and now tell you, even weeping, that "they are enemies to the cross of Christ; whose end "is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose "glory is in their shame; who mind earthly things."*

There are, alas! too many professors of the gospel in most places, whose conduct would constrain a believer of far less gracious sensibility than holy Paul, to weep at every recollection of them: but there are others also, on whose account we ought "to bless "God without ceasing, whilst we remember their "work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of "hope in the Lord Jesus Christ."† Every faithful and affectionate pastor, therefore, will find cause for

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* Phil. iii. 18, 19. † 1 Thess. i. 3.

alternate sorrow and joy, while he reflects on the people, among whom he hath been called to labour.

But, while the apostle saw great cause for thankfulness on account of what the Lord had done for the Philippians, yet he was equally disposed to pray for them continually; not only, lest they should decline in zeal and diligence, but likewise that they might make still greater progress in every thing pertaining to genuine christianity. "For God," says he, "is my "record, how greatly I long after you all in the bow-"els of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your "love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge "and in all judgment: that ye may approve things that "are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without of-"fence, till the day of Christ; being filled with all the "fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ "unto the praise and glory of God."* And in the subsequent parts of the epistle, he copiously and pathetically exhorts them to follow after all those very things, for which he had most fervently prayed in their behalf.

These remarks on the writings of St. Paul may suggest some reflections, which are suited to introduce the subject of this treatise. A great part of that obscurity and confusion, which pervade the discourses of many persons on religious topicks, arises from inattention to the different characters of those, concerning whom the sacred writers speak, or to whom they address their instructions. In all endeavours to do good to the souls of men, it is especially

* Phil. i. 8—11.

necessary, that we should "rightly divide the word "of truth;" and apply it to men's hearts and consciences, according to their various characters and situations: for the portion which suits one may be as improper for another, as the same medicine is for persons labouring under diseases of a contrary nature. If therefore the wise attention of the sacred writers to this important concern be overlooked by their readers; there will be the greatest reason to fear, lest they should wrest even the words of inspiration to their own destruction.

Every man who will take the pains to examine, must be convinced, that the apostles addressed themselves to idolaters, careless sinners, bigotted Jews, proud Pharisees, profane scoffers, or hypocritical abusers of the gospel, in a manner adapted to their several cases: that they employed very different language, and used far other topicks, when they were instructing serious enquirers, encouraging broken-hearted penitents, or "restoring, in the spirit of "meekness, such as had been overtaken in a fault;" and that they brought forward instructions and exhortations of a different nature, when they wrote to established believers; or to those who had newly embraced the gospel, and were full of zeal, but in danger of being misled by false teachers, or drawn aside by manifold temptations.

It is, therefore, evident that the exhortations of the apostles, and their prayers for the progress of their people in holiness, are entirely consistent with the doctrines of grace, for which they in other parts most zealously contend: seeing they have an exclusive re-

ference to persons, who "having been justified by "faith, had peace with God through our Lord Jesus "Christ;" "in whom they had redemption through "his blood, even the forgiveness of their sins, ac- "cording to the riches of his grace." For the Lord had "saved them, and called them with an holy call- "ing, not according to their own works, but accord- "ing to his own purpose and grace, given them in "Christ Jesus before the world began;" and the security of the new covenant engaged to them, that they should "be kept by the power of God, through "faith unto salvation." In imitation, therefore, of this example, and with a most zealous attachment to the same doctrines, the ministers of Christ should now also exhort those, whom, with heart-felt satisfaction, they regard as true believers, to follow after every branch of that holiness which the apostles most pathetically recommended to their beloved children: and assuredly we are deeply criminal, if we cease to pray for them in the same style and manner.

The ensuing treatise being especially intended for the benefit of those, who make a credible profession of the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, nothing will be spoken of those doctrines, in a way of controversy, or explanation; and very little addressed to such as do not believe them. The particular subject of enquiry will be *in what that growth in grace, and progress in the divine life, consist*, to which the apostles so strenuously and repeatedly exhort their christian brethren? And on what account, they were so earnest about these things, with those of whose conversion and salvation they had the fullest confidence? It may

however be requisite to make a few more introductory remarks.

1. The frequent and fervent prayers, with which the instructions of the inspired writers are interspersed, decidedly prove, that 'all holy desires, all good coun-'sels, and all just works,' are from God; as our Liturgy well expresses it: or, in the still more emphatick language of inspiration, that "every good gift, and "every perfect gift is from above; and cometh down "from the Father of lights."—Indeed every prayer for wisdom, holiness, or ability to perform good works, evidently implies, that communications from the Fountain of perfection are necessary, in order to render us wise or holy; that we are warranted to expect such communications, notwithstanding our unworthiness; and that we ought to desire, seek, and depend on them, in all our undertakings. They, therefore, who form higher notions of the native powers, resources, and excellencies of fallen man, must be very inconsistent in presenting prayers to this effect: and their religion must be very different from that of the primitive believers, who expected every good gift from the Father of lights, through Jesus Christ, and by the supply of his Spirit. From the fulness of the divine Saviour, they all received; that fulness still remains unexhausted and undiminished; and would we emulate their superior attainments, imitate their bright examples, or aspire to a large measure of their usefulness, the way is plainly marked out to us in the words of our Lord to his apostles,—"He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same

" bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can " do nothing."*

But the apostles did not deem prayers, in behalf of their brethren, incompatible with exhortations to them, as their constant practice proves. Many professors of the gospel express their astonishment, that their opponents cannot find the doctrines of grace in the sacred Scriptures; and it is indeed a just subject of surprize, for they are written there as with a sunbeam. But is it not equally so, that any man, who seems to reverence and to examine the word of God, should overlook all the exhortations and admonitions with which it abounds, as if they had never been written, or as if we had no concern in them? Yet this is actually the case: numbers are sure to object against every attempt to bring them forward, and to apply them with energy to the hearts and consciences of those, who are attached to the doctrines of grace, though without doubt they are, as much as these, a part of the " counsel of God," and as strongly marked in scripture.—Many allowances indeed must be made for a variety of prejudices, yet it should be remembered, that the *pretended* mother consented to have the child divided: whilst the *real* parent, in unfeigned affection, rather chose to risk the loss of her son, than accede to such a proposal.† When professed christians are thus disposed to mutilate the scriptures, it may be reasonably suspected that they do not cordially love them: but he, who from his heart says to the Lord, " thy word is very pure, therefore thy

* John xv. 5. † 1 Kings iii. 26.

"servant loveth it," loves every part of the sacred volume, *because* it is all very pure: and even when he meets with passages, which excite his fears lest he should come short of the promised blessings; he does not reject or turn from them on that account; but meditates on them, till he becomes more watchful, diligent, and fervent in prayer: and thus he finds that the whole of the word of God "does good to him that "walketh uprightly."

2. The exhortations of the apostles were principally addressed to such as they believed to be real christians, children of God and heirs of heaven: and their prayers related to their spiritual growth and proficiency. Hence we may certainly conclude, that there is something in christianity, both desirable and attainable, beyond, or distinct from the present comfort and the eternal salvation of the individuals who have already embraced it. Indeed the salvation of one soul is an object of such magnitude, that no temporal interest is worthy to stand in competition with it; but the glory of God, in the credit and success of the gospel, and the everlasting state of immense multitudes as connected with it, are beyond comparison more important. That *selfishness*, however, which is natural to fallen creatures, does not yield to any system of doctrine; unless it be accompanied by the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit: but if a person can satisfy himself with the hope of his own salvation, without any habitual regard to the honour of the gospel, or the eternal interests of other men, he is *entirely selfish*, and as evidently destitute of the mind and spirit of Christ, as the man, who, enjoying his

own abundance, cares not how many are pinched with want, even though they suffer through his injustice and oppression.

It is the constant aim and fervent desire of all the faithful and well-instructed ministers of Christ, to excite the minds of their beloved people to a generous regard for the credit of the gospel, and a compassionate longing after the conversion of sinners: and the design of this treatise is to concur with their endeavours for this purpose; and to stir up the pure minds of believers, "by way of remembrance;" in hopes that thus, they may be induced and directed to "let "their light shine" more abundantly "before men; "that they may see their good works, and glorify "their Father who is in heaven:"* or, in other "words, to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our "Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.—To him be glory, "now and for ever. Amen."

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* Matt. v. 16.

SECTION I.

The particulars, in which the true believer's growth in grace consists; as far as they are explicitly contained in St. Paul's prayer for the Philippians.

GROWTH implies the *existence* of all those things, in which an increase is experienced, perceived, or expected; so that the persons, for whom the subsequent discussion is especially intended, are supposed to possess in some measure all those graces or holy dispositions, in which a further growth is represented to be highly desirable and actually attainable. In considering the subject, it would not perhaps be found expedient to examine *exclusively* any single exhortation or prayer contained in the sacred writings; or to adhere to the method, which a strict regard to a system might impose. It is however proposed in this section to confine our attention to the prayer, which St. Paul offered in behalf of the Philippians; except as other scriptures will be adduced in proof or illustration of the several particulars, which thus pass under our consideration. In the subsequent part of the treatise some other subjects will be noticed, which seem requisite to complete the design, but are not conveniently reducible to any of the clauses of this comprehensive text.* I would only further premise, that the

* Phil. i. 9—11.

prayers offered by the sacred writers, when under the immediate influence of the divine Spirit, are peculiarly suited to show us the real nature of that proficiency in genuine christianity, which their benevolent and zealous minds so ardently longed to behold in their beloved people, as above all things conducive to their true prosperity, and the glory of their God and Saviour. And in some respects they may perhaps be more adapted to produce conviction in every mind, than exhortations or precepts can be: because they convey the same instruction without giving so much offence, with less appearance of assuming authority, and with more conciliating demonstrations of affection and good-will.

1. "This," says the apostle, "I pray, that your "LOVE may abound yet more and more." The holy scriptures speak of *love* in the most exalted terms: "Love is of God: and every one that loveth is born "of God, and knoweth God: he that loveth not, "knoweth not God, for GOD IS LOVE." "He that "dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." "Love is the fulfilling of the law." "The end of the "commandment," or of the revelation made by the Lord to sinful men, (παραγγελιας) "is love, out of apure "heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith un-"feigned."* "Nothing availeth in Christ Jesus, but "faith, which worketh by love." "And now abideth "faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of "these is love." *Faith* alone justifies the sinner, as forming his relation to Christ; and by faith alone the

* 1 Tim. i. 5.

christian receives all needful grace from his fulness. Hope of eternal glory, grounded on the promises of God and sealed by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, is the anchor of the soul, and the helmet of salvation: but LOVE is the substance of that holiness and felicity to which we are recovered through faith and hope. The scaffolding is indispensibly necessary at the time: but when the edifice is completed, the scaffolding is taken down as an encumbrance. Thus faith will be lost in sight, and hope swallowed up in enjoyment, when love shall be brought to perfection; but love will remain for ever, the temper, the employment, and happiness of heaven itself.

Love is indeed that distinguishing essential of true religion

> ' Which hypocrites could ne'er attain,
> ' Which false apostates never knew;'

for " every one that loveth is born of God." This declaration cannot mean that sinful men are, in every sense incapable of *love;* but only that they cannot exercise that affection in a holy manner, according to the law of God. For love is the ruling passion of the soul, and gives the direction to all the rest: but in our present disordered state, it is become incapable of fixing on its proper objects, and is therefore prostituted to such as are worthless or abominable. An unholy heart cannot love holiness; " the carnal mind is en-" mity against God," and cannot be subject to his holy law, or view with delight any object that bears his image. Some kind of gratitude may be felt or manifested by an unregenerate sinner, when his inclinations are gratified, when impending danger is averted,

or when he presumptuously deems himself an heir of salvation; and he may have an instinctive benevolence towards men, without any suitable regard to God.

Yet these do not constitute that love, of which the apostle spoke in such exalted terms: though gratitude and benevolence, when they spring from proper principles, may be ranked among the most important of its exercises.—But the holy character of God, with all that immediately relates to him, or bears the stamp of his moral perfections, is the object of our proud aversion and contempt; discoveries of the divine glory and excellence excite proportionable enmity; nor can any benefits overcome our dislike to the holiness of our Benefactor, so long as we continue unregenerate. "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

In regeneration, however, a capacity of spiritual perception is communicated to the soul, in a *manner* which we can neither explain nor comprehend; and we are by it enabled to discern the holy excellence and beauty of heavenly things. This produces a revolution in our judgment and affections: "old things "pass away, behold, all things become new:" our love is now divorced, as it were, from its former base attachments; and we gradually learn to esteem, admire, choose, and delight in that spiritual excellence, which was before the object of our aversion and contempt. The heart, now become in some degree *holy*, proportionably loves holy persons and holy things; we are spiritually minded, and habitually seek our pleasure in spiritual pursuits and employments.—This *capacity* of spiritual perception is not a new *faculty* added to the soul; but the ability of exercising every faculty,

which God hath given us, in a suitable manner, about the grand concerns of religion; for which our apostacy from our Creator, and idolatrous attachment to the creature had wholly disqualified us. It is, therefore, represented in scripture by images taken from our bodily senses: the regenerate soul *sees* heavenly beauty, *hears* divine harmony, *smells* fragrancy as of "ointment poured forth," and *tastes* sweetness as of "honey and the honey-comb." Yet these perceptions in the new convert are feeble and indistinct; and often almost over-born and swallowed up in the tumult of natural passions, and the conflict with carnal propensities: they, however, uniformly influence him, as "a new-born babe, to desire the sincere milk of the "word, that *he may grow thereby*, seeing that he "has tasted that the Lord is gracious."* And they constitute that "leaven," which will gradually diffuse its influence, "till the whole be leavened;" till all the faculties, affections, and operations of the soul be made to partake of the same holy nature and tendency.

When we are thus made capable of perceiving in some degree, the beauty and glory of the divine perfections, and of forming some proper estimate of our obligations and relations to our Creator and Benefactor; we are brought to consent to his holy law, that it is good, and that its commands, though very strict and spiritual, are reasonable, equitable, and beneficial: and the view of the evil of sin, thus obtained, though

* 1 Pet. ii. 2, 3.

it is imperfect, produces a submission to the justice of God in the condemnation of transgressors. Other discoveries of our guilt and danger, and of the wrath to which we are exposed, may alarm us; but nothing short of this can produce genuine humiliation and self-abasement; which will be matured and increased by fuller views of the glory of God in the person and salvation of Jesus Christ.

For did we only contemplate the perfections of God, as displayed in the works of creation and providence, or illustrated by the justice of his law and government; our consciousness of guilt and pollution would so discourage us, nay, lead us to the borders of despair, that we should be induced to struggle earnestly against conviction, and to oppose the humiliating effect of every discovery of God, which we were unable to exclude. But when we are led to perceive, along with our views of the odiousness and desert of our sins, the glory of God in the harmonious display of all his attributes, through the person and redemption of his Son: this allays our terrors, inspires our hope, and fixes our attention; while it exceedingly increases humiliation and self-abasement.—The dignity of the divine Redeemer, the nature of his undertaking, the immensity of his compassionate and condescending love, the perfection and value of his righteousness, the depth, intenseness, and variety of his sufferings; the honour thus given to the law and justice of God; the sufficiency of his atonement; his subsequent resurrection, triumphant ascension, and glorious exaltation; his power, faithfulness, and love; his

gracious invitations and precious promises, with the manifold blessings which he freely bestows on the vilest of sinners, who come to God by him;—these are all distinct subjects for our meditation, peculiarly suited to interest, instruct, and affect our minds, and to give us entirely new thoughts of God and of ourselves, of sin and holiness, of our immortal souls, our eternal concerns, our past lives, our present conduct and situation, and of all those things which concur to produce deep humility, lively hope, admiring love and gratitude; and every holy affection. Here without dismay we may contemplate the divine character with fixed attention; whilst we view it through a medium that softens its splendours, and endears its beauty and glory to our hearts. Here we view infinite justice, holiness, mercy, faithfulness, and wisdom, in perfect harmony, whilst each attribute reflects glory on all the rest. At the same time our interest in these grand concerns renders them far more affecting to our minds; and we are enabled, in revering and admiring the holy majesty of God, and adoring his transcendent excellency, to give up our hearts to the pleasing desire and hope of having him, sinful as we are, to be our Father, Friend, and everlasting Portion. When we have been encouraged to make this choice and indulge this hope, we begin to fear above all things, lest we should come short of it: we learn to take pleasure in such devout exercises, as strengthen our confidence or give us some anticipation of our desired felicity; we likewise feel lively emotions of gratitude for the condescending and merciful dealings of our glorious Lord with such vile sinners; we long for

others also to know and love him, to enjoy his favour, and to render him praise. Thus we become zealous for his honour, grieved when we offend him, ashamed and humbled at the recollection of past transgressions, watchful against temptation and every occasion of sin, and troubled at hearing others express contempt or enmity against so gracious and merciful a God and Saviour.—All these varied exercises of holy love have respect to the incomprehensible mysteries of the divine nature, displayed in the grand scheme of our salvation; as originating from the most free love of the Father, communicated to us through the atonement of the incarnate Son, and by the regenerating and sanctifying influences of The Holy Spirit. But it will especially centre, as it were, in the person of Emmanuel, God manifested in the flesh; as the glorious excellency and loveliness of the Deity is there more immediately revealed to us; and as he that loves, honours, believes, and obeys the Son, loves honours, believes, and obeys the Father that sent him; for "he that hath the Son, hath the Father also;" and Christ is the appointed medium by which we approach, know, and glorify the invisible God.

The same capacity of perceiving and loving spiritual excellency, which is essential to every exercise of holy love towards our God and Saviour, disposes us also to "delight in his law after the inward man:" to "count all his commandments in all things to be "right; and to hate every false way:" "to choose "the precepts of the Lord;" and to "long to have "ours ways directed to keep them." Whilst these therefore are our desires and prayers, we must be pro-

portionably grieved and disquieted by " the sin that " dwelleth in us;" and the want of more entire conformity to that holy, just, and good law, which we now most cordially approve, will be a constant source of sorrow and cause of humiliation; and at some times will prove the burden or even the terror of our hearts. Thus the believer's tears, groans, and complaints, because " he cannot do the things that he would," being connected with evident conscientiousness and diligence in performing the will of God, may be considered as a proof that he has the holy law of God written in his heart by regenerating grace.

The same holy judgment and taste of the renewed soul enables him to relish every part of the sacred scriptures; and, in proportion to the degree of his spirituality, he loves to read and meditate on the word of God: he not only uses it as " the lantern of his " paths," or the ground of his hope; but, he makes it his " delight and his counsellor;" he esteems it " more than his necessary food;" and feels an appetite for its salutary instruction, like that of the newborn babe for the milk of the breast.—The same principle causes him to love the house of God, and to " count one day in his courts better than a thou- " sand." He is no longer glad of an excuse for staying from the publick ordinances of God, exact in determining how often he is bound in duty to attend on them, or disposed to yield to every trivial obstacle that renders such attendance inconvenient or difficult; for " he is glad when it is said to him, let us go unto the " house of the Lord;" he longs for the renewal of that satisfaction which he has there experienced in communion with God and his saints; and he

finds it no easy matter to be resigned to the will of God, when under a necessity to absent himself. — Thus the Lord's day, which was formerly a weariness, unless profaned by worldly business, pleasure, or company, becomes his delight: and, though too often he has reason to lament that his sabbaths are passed without the expected satisfaction and advantage, yet he still meets their return with pleasure, and deems them the happiest days of his life. As he grows in holy love he is enabled to adopt the Psalmist's words, in respect of the worship he renders to the Lord, and to say, "My soul is satisfied as with marrow and "fatness, whilst I praise thee with joyful lips:" and every thing that relates to the service of God is endeared to his heart and held in reverence and honour.

In like manner, he perceives the "beauty of the "Lord," in the character and conduct of his people, whom before he neglected, despised, or disliked: and thus he learns to love and respect them as the excellent of the earth. He chooses them for his most valued companions; he sympathizes with their joys and sorrows; he seeks their welfare, and according to his ability endeavours to promote it; he bears with their failings and prejudices, casting the mantle of love over their infirmities: he prays for their prosperity and happiness: and, if he can but see, or think he sees, the image of his beloved Lord upon them, he counts them his brethren, though they belong not to his subdivision of the church, subscribe not exactly his creed, and fill up a very different station in the family of God.

The admiring contemplation of the glory of the Lord, in the person and salvation of Christ, is always productive of a gradual transformation of the soul into his holy image:* and the Saviour's condescending and compassionate love, to the very persons whose crimes he most deeply abhorred, appears peculiarly beautiful and endearing to the redeemed sinner. Thus benevolent love to mankind in general is produced and increased; selfish and contracted prejudices are removed; and proud contempt of the mean, the vile, and the ignorant, bitter resentment born to the injurious, and envy of rivals and competitors, are changed into pity and good will: while conformity to Christ, love to his most beautiful and glorious character, gratitude for redeeming love, and willing obedience to his commandments, combine their energy, in disposing his true disciples to love strangers and persecutors, the most abandoned transgressors, and the most provoking enemies; and to copy his example of long-suffering, meekness, forgiveness, compassion, fervent prayers and tears for them, and persevering endeavours to overcome evil with good.

When love, the ruling principle of activity in the mind of man, is thus fixed on its proper objects, and regulated, proportioned and exercised according to the divine law of God; it is evident that all spiritual worship, humble submission and devoted obedience to God, with all righteousness, goodness, and truth, in our conduct towards men, must result from it, and grow in pro-

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* 2 Cor. iii. 17, 18.

portion as it is increased. We may, therefore, easily perceive the propriety of the apostle's prayer for the Philippians, "that their love might abound yet more and "more."—This accords with many other prayers and exhortations in his epistles, "The Lord grant—that "Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, be- "ing rooted and grounded *in love*, may know the love "of Christ which passeth knowledge."* "The Lord "make you to abound in love one towards another, and "towards all men, even as we do towards you;—to "the end he may establish your hearts unblameable "in holiness." "Ye are taught of God to love one "another; and indeed ye do it:—but we beseech you "to increase more and more."† "Your faith grow- "eth exceedingly, and the love of every one of you "all towards each other aboundeth."‡ Indeed the love of believers towards each other is principally meant in these texts: but then we know that this love is the result, the evidence, and the measure, of our love to God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ.—We are required to consider every true christian as the brother and representative of our unseen Redeemer; and all the love we bear to them, and the good we do them, for his sake, will be acknowledged and graciously recompensed at the last day, as the indubitable proof of the reality and strength of our love to him.

But let us more particularly consider the words before us.—"That your love may *abound;* may abound "*more;* may abound *yet* more; may abound *yet more*

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* Eph. iii. 16—19. † 1 Thess. iii. 12, 13. iv. 9, 10.
‡ 2 Thess. i. 3.

"*and more!*"—*Press forwards* is the christian's motto, and the minister's watch word. "We beseech you, "brethren, that as ye have received of us how ye "ought to walk and to please God; so ye would a- "bound more and more."* The lively believer is never in this world satisfied with his degree of sanctification; but still hungers and thirsts for more entire conformity to the image and law of God: and the zealous minister never thinks his beloved people arrived at the summit of improvement: but, while he says, "I bless God, ye abound in love;" he also adds, "I pray God that you may abound yet more and "more:"—and, "Seeing you have purified your "souls, in obeying the truth, through the Spirit, unto "unfeigned love of the brethren,—see that ye love one "another with a pure heart fervently."†

Comparing these scriptures with our Lord's declaration, "Every branch in me, that beareth fruit, my "Father purgeth, that it may bring forth more "fruit,"‡ we may properly advert to a notion very prevalent in some places among professors of the gospel. It is considered by them as a thing of course for true christians to *leave their first love;* young converts are supposed to abound most in love; and it is expected that they will decline in that respect, as they advance to maturity in judgment and experience. The expression, used in conveying these ideas, is found but once in scripture. "Nevertheless" says Christ to the Ephesian church, "I have somewhat against

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* 1 Thess. iv. 1. † 1 Pet. i. 22. ‡ John xv. 1—5.

" thee; because thou hast *left thy first love:* remem-
" ber therefore from whence thou art fallen, and re-
" pent, and do thy first works; else I will come unto
" thee quickly, and I will remove thy candlestick out
" of his place, except thou repent."* The severe rebuke, the earnest exhortation, and the solemn warning of this passage, as connected with the commendation bestowed on the Ephesians in other respects, do not seem calculated to encourage men in reducing the before mentioned opinion to practice. And it should also be observed that the stony-ground hearers lost their lively affections, and their religion along with them, " because they had no root in themselves."

Surely nothing can be more absurd, than to suppose that a christian, when *growing in grace*, can decline in that very thing, in which grace principally consists! and love is evidently the greatest of all christian graces.† Such a sentiment is most pernicious in its tendency and effects; it gives encouragement to hypocrites, who disgrace the gospel; it assists many in deceiving themselves; and it induces unstable and injudicious believers indolently to yield to lukewarmness as a matter of course, and even an evidence of spiritual proficiency, when they ought to watch and pray against it, and to be greatly alarmed and humbled on the least consciousness of its growing on them, from a conviction of its being one of the most detestable and aggravated proofs of human depravity.—By this stratagem, Satan hath succeeded, during a lukewarm age, in establishing a false test and standard of

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* Rev. ii. 4, 5. † 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

maturity in experience and the life of faith; and hath managed in consequence to render it *true in fact:* that is, *professors of the gospel do generally thus decline.* Thus the sentiment becomes specious, by an appeal to observation and experience; and he, who ventures to say, "my brethren, these things ought not so to "be," is thought to condemn the generation of God's children.

But what saith Christ to the Laodiceans? "Be- "cause thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, "I will spue thee out of my mouth."*—This strange opinion stands, not only unsupported by scripture, but in direct opposition to it: the question is not how things are?—but how they ought to be? The growing christian indeed experiences seasons of comparative coldness and negligence, for which he is very deeply humbled: but upon the whole the vigour of his love is continually increasing, and he manifests this to be the case in his whole conduct. To pray "that our love may abound yet more and more;" or, "that we may grow in grace," and make progress in experimental religion, amounts nearly to the same thing; at least there is an inseparable connexion between the two petitions, and they reciprocally imply each other.—We shall, however, in some measure, discover by what means the preceding most detestable sentiment has insinuated itself among pious, humble christians, whilst we proceed to consider the next clause of the apostle's prayer.

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* Rev. iii. 16.

2. Not satisfied with desiring that their "love might "abound yet more and more,"—he subjoined these words, "in knowledge and in all judgment:" and they suggest to us a second particular, in which growth of grace very greatly consists. There may be very high affections about religion, without the communication of holy principles: surprize at extraordinary and unexpected events; sanguine hopes of advantages, which appear very great and glorious; sudden transitions from adversity to prosperity, from sorrow to joy, or from pain to pleasure; and every circumstance which excites self-complacency or strong confidence, will involve or occasion a great flow of vehement affections, in the concerns of religion as well as in those of this life. Thus the Israelites on the banks of the red sea, beholding their formidable enemies dead on the shore, and amazed at their own most extraordinary deliverance, "believed the word of the "LORD and sang his praise:" but this apparently good frame, in a vast majority of them, continued no longer than till their inclinations were thwarted; and "they soon forgat the works of God, and would not "abide his counsel." These affections are not of a permanent nature; and, if a man possess nothing better, "he has no root in himself, and in time of temp- "tation will fall away."

The new convert indeed experiences and manifests a similar flow of affections. The Lord, in making a christian, does not destroy the original constitution of the human soul; and the natural passions are useful in the infancy of divine life to produce a proper degree of earnestness and diligence. But with them there

exists a spark of heavenly love, which gathers strength whilst they are weakened, and glows more vigorously under their almost expiring ashes.—As this principle acquires energy and ascendancy, it suffices to produce activity, and thus to subordinate and regulate all inferior affections: then every kind of earnestness, which did not spring from knowledge, and was not exercised in judgment and discretion, becomes unnecessary, and may abate without any detriment.

All *holy* affections spring from divine illumination, and increase with the advancement of spiritual knowledge and genuine experience. In proportion as the christian is enabled to discern more clearly and distinctly the nature and excellency of heavenly things; and as he experiences more fully the pleasure which they are capable of affording; the more will he love and delight in them. The reasons which induce him to love the Lord, and his truths, precepts, and people, are perceived with increasing evidence; his thirst after happiness in the favour of God, his supreme valuation of redemption and salvation in Christ, his gratitude to him and zeal for his glory, with attachment to his cause, and devotedness to his service, appear more and more reasonable, in proportion as his mind is truly enlightened by the influences of the Holy Spirit.—He also better understands, why "he "who loves God should love his brother also;" and why he ought to copy the forbearance, compassion, and mercy, of which his redeeming Lord hath given him an example.—As his views enlarge he learns to pay less regard to the strong emotions of the animal

spirits, which produce very pleasing but transient sensations, than to that steady and powerful affection, which influences a man to habitual self-denying obedience; and which connects with disinterested endeavours to "do good to all men, especially to them who "are of the household of faith;" and he accustoms himself to judge of the sincerity and degree of his love, not by certain fluctuations in his feelings; but by its energy, in prevailing on him to renounce, venture, and endure every thing, in promoting the glory of God and the good of his redeemed people. "For "this is the love of God, that we keep his com-"mandments: and his commandments are not griev-"ous."—Thus the christian may actually abound more and more in love as connected with knowledge, when ignorant and selfish passions have subsided: the tumult of his feelings may be greatly abated, when the energy of pure and heavenly love is proportionably increased: and, as impetuous affections and vehement zeal, accompanied with pride and anger, become less and less apparent, he may manifest far more of that love, which "suffers long and is kind, which envieth "not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not "behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not "easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in "iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; which beareth "all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, "and endureth all things." In short, that love, which is shown "in deed and in truth," may abound exceedingly, when heavenly wisdom and deep humility have made the christian ashamed of those ostentatious appearances of love, which consist principally "in

"word and in tongue," in high professions, noisy disputings, and cheap protestations."*

This will appear more evidently, by considering the other expression employed by the apostle on this occasion—"in all *judgment*." The word is taken from the bodily senses, and may in some degree coincide with the spiritual perception before described; but it implies also promptitude and exactness of discernment, as acquired by enlarged knowledge and experience; and it is peculiarly applicable to those persons, "who by reason of use," (or *habit*,) "have "their senses exercised to discern good and evil." We may, therefore take the word in the common meaning, for the mental perception, when it distinguishes objects, "as the ear tries sounds, and as the "mouth tastes meats;" and this habit of judging accurately and promptly, concerning those matters with which we are conversant, is peculiarly useful, in every part of our conduct.

That zeal which springs from vehement affection, without proportionable knowledge and judgment, generally wastes its vigour about things frivolous, worthless, or injurious: it is tarnished with arrogance, bitterness, and censoriousness; it renders men inattentive to the duties of their stations and relations in life, and regardless of propriety and decorum: it influences them to attempt things impracticable or romantick by rash and unwarrantable means; and it hurries them into such tempers and actions, as needlessly increase the prejudices of mankind against the

* 1 Cor. xiii. James ii. 15, 16. iii. 13—18. 1 John iii. 16—20.

gospel and its professors. But when the heart is upright, and a man is favoured with sound instruction and prudent counsel, even his mistakes will abate his confidence and precipitation, and reiterated disappointments will render him more cautious and considerate. In proportion as he grows in grace, he will learn humility, and simplicity of dependence on God, and discover the duties of his station: he will also become capable of distinguishing between those things, which may be attempted with a reasonable prospect of success, and such as, however desirable, cannot prudently be undertaken: and he will watch and wait for the openings of providence; sensible that it is highly important to confine himself to scriptural and warrantable means, in all his endeavours to bring others over to his sentiments. The rashness, ostentation, and forwardness of his disposition being thus abated, the exercise of his love will be less observable to mankind in general, even when the vigour of it is exceedingly increased, and the effects more beneficial and permanent than before. "The wisdom, that is "from above, is first pure, then peaceable; gentle and "easy to be intreated; full of mercy and good fruits; "without partiality, and without hypocrisy: and the "fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that "make peace."* The man therefore, who is directed by this wisdom, will not be so eager to engage in violent disputes about doctrines as formerly: but he will be far more careful to understand and attend to the several duties of his station; submissively to ho-

* James iii. 13—18.

nour his superiors and seniors, and obey those that are placed over him in all things lawful; to win them by the silent preaching of a blameless life, by a meek and quiet spirit, by sincerity and integrity in word and deed, and by a persevering endeavour to render all connected with him easy and happy. His love will vent itself more in fervent prayers for others, which is a secret, but most effectual way of usefulness: he will improve his influence in his circle to some good purposes, and be daily increasing it by consistency and conscientiousness? he will peaceably occupy with his talent, as he hath opportunity; and when more favourable occasions are presented he will gladly embrace them.

It is not sufficient, that we are sure the service, in which we are about to engage, is a good work; we should also be satisfied that it is the service, to which the Lord hath called us; and this frequently cannot be determined without much knowledge and sound judgment. In a great house there are many servants, and it is not enough that they are all employed about their master's work: for, unless every one knows and performs the duty of his proper place, confusion and disturbance will be inevitable; many things will be left undone, and almost every thing done amiss.—"The "Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who "left his house, and gave authority to his servants, "and *to every man his work:*" and, when every one peaceably, intelligently, and diligently minds his proper business, the affairs of the church, as well as those of the family, are managed respectably and advantageously. True wisdom, therefore, consists very

much in a man's understanding the duties of his station, and performing them in a quiet and exemplary manner: and love abounds to the best purpose, when it is exercised "in knowledge and in all judgment." The apostle, therefore, ceased not to pray for the Colossians, "that they might be filled with the *knowledge* "*of the will of God*, in all wisdom and spiritual under- "standing; that they might walk worthy of the Lord, "unto all pleasing; being fruitful in every good work, "and increasing in the knowledge of God."* He exhorted the Ephesians to "walk circumspectly, not as "fools but as wise;—and understanding *what the will* "*of the Lord is.*"† And he thus counselled the Corinthians, "Be not children in understanding; how- "beit in malice be ye children, but in understanding "be ye men."‡

It should also be observed, that a defect in judgment while love is very fervent, often produces a disproportionate zeal and earnestness: so that attention to one part of a man's duty swallows up, as it were, all due regard to others. Thus, love to publick ordinances, or christian conversation, frequently misleads professors to neglect their families and necessary worldly business, or to be inattentive to relative duties; and this brings reproach on the word of God. Social religion also often interferes with the exercises of the closet, and prevents *growth in grace*, which cannot be expected without much secret self-examination, recollection, meditation, and prayer. In like manner one

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* Col. i. 9, 10. † Eph. v. 15—17. ‡ 1 Cor. xiv. 20.

holy disposition entrenches on another: boldness excludes meekness and prudence, or meekness and prudence degenerate into timidity; and various excesses of this kind render men's profession of the gospel rather a mis-shapen monster, than a beautiful well-proportioned figure, as christianity is represented in the scripture. But the increase of knowledge and judgment, while holy love also acquires permanent energy, leads a man to assign to every duty its proper place and order; and to cultivate every holy disposition in due proportion and harmony with other graces. Thus redundancies being retrenched, deficiencies supplied, irregularities corrected, natural propensities restrained, and *apparently* opposite graces brought to coalesce, and man's religion possesses symmetry and beauty, and he "adorns the "doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."*

The fervent affections of a young convert resemble a fire of thorns, which furiously blazes and crackles, but communicates little heat, and is speedily extinct: while the intelligent and judicious love of a mature christian may be compared to the steady fire made of substantial fuel, which burns silently, and durably produces far greater effects.—Or, to use another illustration:—Suppose an unconverted person delivered in a most surprising manner, from imminent danger by shipwreck; he would doubtless experience a variety of conflicting passions, and manifest very strong affections; while his joy and amazement would be connected with a kind of natural gratitude to God for his

* 2 Pet. i 5—7.

preservation: but this would produce no abiding change in his heart and conduct. Whereas, should this man, after some years be truly converted, he would probably never be able to recover the lively sensations and high affections, which he felt when first escaped from the jaws of death: yet, understanding more distinctly the nature and value of the mercy vouchsafed him, his own extreme unworthiness, the imminent danger to which his immortal soul was exposed, and the astonishing love of God in rescuing him from it, that he might at length become his salvation; his affections, though less tumultuous, would be more rational, and his gratitude would produce a proportionable effect on his future behaviour.

In fine, lively affections, without knowledge and judgment, betray men into enthusiasm, delusion, absurdity, and inexcusable practices; which injure themselves, mislead others, and disgrace the gospel:—while knowledge and judgment, when separated from holy love, puff up the professor, and like a stagnating pool become useless or noxious. But the happy union of them in the same character constitutes the highest excellency that can be found on earth; of which the apostle himself seems to have been the most illustrious instance, that hath been found among mere men, from the beginning of the world to the present time. In these things he followed Christ, and prayed for his brethren that they might follow him. Yet he deemed not himself to have already attained; but felt the necessity of "pressing forward, forgetting those "things which were behind, and reaching forth to "those things that were before." And as we, most

assuredly, are far beneath him in these invaluable attainments, if we would in a compendious manner know the nature of *growth in grace*, we should study his character and copy his example, according to his exhortation to his beloved Philippians.*

It may be proper in this place to observe, that certain persons, either *designedly* or *incautiously* countenancing antinomian tenets, object to the sentiment, that the law of God is the believer's *rule of conduct*, under the pretence, 'that love renders such a rule unnecessary.' But it should be considered that love undirected by any rule, cannot be exercised "in "knowledge and in all judgment." Love is the first principle, or main spring, of a believer's conduct: but it cannot be also the regulator; for nothing requires so much regulation as the exercise of this affection, in respect of the various objects of it, the proportion due to each, and the manner in which it is to be expressed.—The sails, receiving the impulsive energy of the wind, put the vessel in motion; but they would only hurry it upon some rock or quicksand to its destruction, or at best drive it far from its intended course, were they not managed according to the rules of navigation, in connexion with the pilot's attention to the helm, and the observations made respecting the progress and situation of the vessel. He, therefore, who rejects the holy commandment, as the rule of his conduct, under the vain pretence that fervent love supercedes all occasion for such a rule, acts as absurdly as

* Phil. iii. 12—21.

mariners would do, should they crowd all the sail that they could, and disdain to attend to the helm, the compass, or nautical observations, because not necessary to hasten the progress of the vessel!—Love is indeed the fulfilling of the law: but it should be remembered, that we are required to love God with *all our understanding*, as well as with all our heart; "and "this is the love of God, that we keep his command-"ments."

3. The apostle next prays for his brethren, that "they might approve things that are excellent;" or as it might more literally be rendered *that they might prove things that differ*, and so learn to distinguish between things genuine, and their most specious counterfeits. This indeed is but a further advancement of the same principles and affections, in their progress towards perfection: yet it may be considered as another particular of great importance to our growth in grace; and may be viewed according to the two distinct translations which have been given to the text, only reversing the order of them.—

We may first make some remarks on the exercise and improvement of the distinguishing faculty, as an essential part of our spiritual advancement to maturity. The inherent excellency of some things above others exists previously to our discernment of it; and we have seen that the capacity of perceiving this excellency, is the peculiar effect of regeneration: but we may here add, that, like the capacities we receive from nature, it may be improved or retarded in its operations: want of information or exercise may keep it obtuse and feeble; suitable instructions and habits may

render it more acute, exact, and vigorous.—Now the Lord is pleased to work *by means*, in the kingdom of grace, as well as in that of nature: and the children of God require, and profit by, education, in the same manner as our children. Nay, spiritual capacities differ in degree like natural abilities, with which they have probably some connexion. As, therefore, a man of inferior talents, cultivated by a good education, will in many respects possess advantages over a man of greater natural powers, which have been left uncultivated: so experience proves, that something analogous to this takes place among believers. Every regenerate man has a measure of spiritual discernment, but the disproportion, in which some possess it above others, is immensely great.—

Next to an upright heart, and a spirit of active love, nothing seems to be of more importance to a consistent, useful, and comfortable life, than this accuracy of the distinguishing faculty; without which, even the fervour of spiritual love will often be wasted upon counterfeits, or exercised in uncertainty. "Satan "transforms himself into an angel of light; and his "ministers are transformed into ministers of righ- "teousness." Even pious men differ widely in their sentiments about many parts of religion: they are often very confident in their opinions and eager in defending them: thus controversies are multiplied, and agitated with unchristian vehemence and pertinacity; and we cannot but meet with various specious objections to our views of truth, and manifold difficulties in all we read and hear. Hence we may perceive the importance of cultivating a readiness and accuracy of

trying and distinguishing sentiments, pretensions, and practices, according to the maxims and decisions of God's word:—but this cannot be done, without a patient investigation of the sacred oracles, and a persevering endeavour in habituating ourselves, "to com-"pare spiritual things with spiritual," and to consider things according to their nature and tendency, or the relations and proportions which they bear to one another. A constant and simple dependence on the promised teaching of the Holy Spirit is also requisite, in order that we may "henceforth be no more chil-"dren, tossed to and fro with every wind of doc-"trine, by the sleight of men, and cunning crafti-"ness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." And that we may be able to digest without difficulty the "strong meat, which belongeth to them that are of "full age, and who, by reason of use, have their "senses exercised to discern both good and evil."*

We ought most willingly to receive information from every one, and to be always learners; but our Lord has forbidden us to "call any man master upon "earth."—We should thankfully use the help of others to point out objects to us: but we must at last see them with our own eyes, or not at all. Every constituent of humility and teachableness is comprised in that man's temper, who examines with candid attention such sentiments, as have any respectable claim to his notice; who weighs the arguments by which they are supported, comparing them with the standard of scripture; who earnestly prays for the

* Eph. iv. 14. Heb. v. 14.

teaching of the Holy Spirit to assist him in forming his judgment concerning them; and who observes the rules of modesty and meekness in opposing such sentiments as he deems erroneous.—To go further than this would render us the disciples of men; and, however specious in appearance, it is generally the offspring of indolence and want of seriousness, it betrays a comparative disregard to the importance of divine truth, and it forms a convenient and alas, in general, a *creditable*, excuse for shunning the trouble of reflection and patient investigation.

A comprehensive acquaintance with christianity in the dependence, subordination, harmony, and proportion, which every doctrine bears to all the other parts of the system; with an accurate knowledge of the temper and conduct becoming believers in all the relations of life, and the situations in which they are or may be placed, is an attainment of great importance and difficulty: nor can any tolerable proficiency be made in it, without great diligence, and persevering application of mind for a long time; especially as most can only spare a short portion of every day or week from other duties, for such investigations. Yet, without some considerable measure of this acquaintance with the subject, how shall a man be able to distinguish between *truth* and *error artfully disguised?* Between *good* and *evil speciously proposed?* Between solid and plausible arguments and objections? Without a degree of accuracy in spiritual perception, how can the believer separate the precious from the vile, when Satan, by means of false teachers, or by partially misleading pious men, mingles the poison of false doctrine

with the wholesome food of divine truth? How shall he draw the water of life pure and wholesome, when immense pains are taken to corrupt the wells of salvation? How escape the snares of the enemy, who seldom tempts pious persons to gross crimes, but seduces them by the appearence of good? How avoid the extremes, into which he never fails attempting to drive the friends of truth; or avoid being frighted from those things, which are excellent, by hard names? Without this, how can we be enabled to withstand and oppose the prevailing heresies of the times; or maintain our ground against the demands of human authority, or the clamours of a deluded multitude? In short, how can we reasonably hope to steer our course, through the shoals, rocks, and whirlpools, that abound in this perilous ocean, without suffering great loss, though we should be marvelously preserved from shipwreck? Or how shall we shun one danger without risking another perhaps more formidable?

It is indeed evident to every observing person, that the want of this accuracy and promptitude in distinguishing things that differ, exposes many persons to be seduced into various errors both in doctrine and practice, and renders their conduct unstable and their characters inconsistent. Such things may not form an impeachment of a man's sincerity: but they render him very uncomfortable in himself and to his friends; they weaken his influence and prevent his usefulness; they lead him to sanction error by his example, and, as it were, to give bad bills a currency by indorsing or accepting them; and they often bring a reproach on the gospel itself. On the other hand, the man, who, by

patient investigation in dependence on the teaching of the Holy Spirit, has formed an habit, and acquired a facility in, "proving all things and holding fast that which "is good," will proceed with steadiness and consistency through the various circumstances which occur in this changing world; he will be prepared to maintain the credit of his profession, and the tranquility of his mind, in trying times: he will know how to attend with firmness to his own duties, even amidst persecutions, without incurring the disgrace or distress of "suffering as an evil-doer, or as a busy-body in other "men's matters." He will learn either to suspend his opinion, or decidedly to express his disapprobation, when novel sentiments or confident pretensions attract the public notice: for these commonly prove like glaring meteors; they succeed one another at certain intervals, and then fall into contempt and oblivion, though for the time they too generally meet with encouragement from many professors of religion, to the disgrace of the cause, and the great loss of those who turn aside after them.

The clause under consideration, however, may be considered according to the common translation of it; "that ye may approve things that are excellent." This has indeed been in a great measure anticipated, in the observations made on the increase of holy love: yet it may not be improper to subjoin some thoughts in this place, on cordial approbation of *things excellent*, and abhorrence of *things that are evil;* without which the most exact outward regularity of conduct is a mere form of godliness, or a pagan virtue.—"Hate "the evil, and love the good," was the Lord's ex-

hortation to Israel: "Abhor that which is evil, cleave "to that which is good," is the apostolical message to christians.* This the spiritual law requires, and the nature of true repentance implies: without this state of the heart, sin will, in one form or other, maintain its dominion, and shortly re assume its ascendency, notwithstanding terrors of conviction, extacies of devotion, or raptures of joy; nor can any man without it be "meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the "saints in light."

However unregenerate persons may amuse themselves with harangues on the beauty of virtue, it is manifest that they do not thus "approve things that are "excellent," according to the scriptural standard of excellency: for if they did, they would not show a decided aversion to the character of those, whom God has in every age honoured as the excellent of the earth; while they not only tolerate, but delight in, and lavish their encomiums on, such persons and actions "as God abhorreth." Yet it is self-evident, that the more a man delights in the good, and hates the evil, the nearer he must approach to the right frame of mind, the greater must be his measure of conformity to God, the better must he be prepared for serving him, and the more completely furnished for every good work.—The abhorrence of evil and the love of holiness must proportionably be attended with self-abasement and humiliation for sin; with simplicity of dependence on the mercy and grace of God in Christ

* Amos v. 15. Rom. xii. 9.

Jesus; with admiring views of his love, and of the preciousness of his salvation; with modesty, meekness, gratitude, patience, and contentment; with watchfulness against the evil that we hate, diligence in pursuing and practising the good which we love, and delight even in a self-denying course of obedience: nor could we ever be proud of any attainments or performances, if we entirely abhorred the mixture of evil, which an acute spiritual discernment will perceive in all we do. It must, therefore, be a most important part of the christain's growth in grace, to become more and more able readily to prove things that differ; to distinguish accurately between genuine excellency and all counterfeits; to separate exactly the good from the mixtures of evil blended with it; and cordially to love the good and to abhor the evil, which is found in characters, actions, or tempers, whether ourselves or others are concerned.

4. The next clause in this prayer, "that ye may "be sincere," suggests to us another particular, in which the believer's growth in grace consists. There may be sincerity without genuine piety: but piety cannot subsist without sincerity. Prejudice, pride, carnal affections, or other corrupt principles may so retain a man in ignorance, or pervert his judgment, that he may "verily think he ought to do many things "contrary to the name of Christ;" and thus very sincerely fight against God. He cannot indeed be justly charged with *insincerity:* but that does not excuse his other crimes. He is not a humble, serious, and teachable enquirer after the truth, who seeks it diligently and impartially, as disposed to embrace and ad-

here to it wherever he finds it, or whatever it may cost him. On the contrary he shuts his eyes against the light, and strives against his own convictions, when his prejudices, interests, or inclinations are concerned: and "*for this cause* God sends," such men, "a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; "that they might all be damned, who believed not "the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness."* But to be sincere, in the scriptural sense, implies the profession of that religion, which God hath revealed to us; and must, therefore, differ very widely from sincerity in opposing his truths, precepts, and servants. It consists in *sincerely* reverencing and believing the doctrines of the gospel, embracing the salvation of Christ, and yielding ourselves to God, as willing to be taught and ruled by him; in *sincerely* seeking to know the truth; in boldly professing it, and endeavouring to live according to it; and in *sincerely* repenting of every sin, renouncing the world, denying ourselves, taking up our cross, and following our Lord, in the cheerful obedience of faith and love. When he, who searcheth the heart, declares any one to be "a chris-"tian indeed, in whom there is no guile;" when his "love is without dissimulation," and he is actually as much disposed to every good work, as he desires to be thought; when he can say, without hesitation or ostentation, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest "that I love thee;" when he is as careful to approve his secret conduct to God, as to maintain his credit before

* 2 Thess. ii 9—12.

men, and dreads hypocrisy more than human censure; when mental discipline, and the government of his thoughts from a part of his daily employment, and 'Cleanse the thoughts of my heart by the inspiration of 'thy Holy Spirit,' a part of his secret daily prayer; when he is not conscious of any reserves in his obedience, in favour of some darling passion, or against some self-denying duty: then a man is indeed a sound character, and shall never be put to shame.—Let it not, however, be supposed, that a state of perfection is intended: the very man, of whom these things may justly be spoken, feels sin dwelling in him, warring against him, and mixing with all he does: he often goes mourning to the throne of grace, and with sighs and groans laments before God those defects and defilements, which no human eye witnesseth, and which numbers would scarcely consider as at all reprehensible.

But he allows himself in no sin: he desires without exception to have all evil dispositions mortified; and no more *habitually* permits envy, malice, pride, avarice, or lust, to lodge as a welcome guest in his heart, than he commits gross crimes in his daily conduct.

With such a consciousness of integrity in his christian profession the apostle was supported, under the various calumnies and suspicions, to which he was subjected. "Our rejoicing," says he, "is this, the "testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and "*godly sincerity*, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the "grace of God, we have had our conversation in the "world."* This *godly sincerity* as much differs from

*2 Cor. i. 12.

worldly sincerity, as *godly sorrow* does from *worldly sorrow*:* It is in some degree essential to the character of a christian; but it gathers strength and acquires a more complete ascendency, as he grows in grace; and with increasing knowledge, sensibility, and discernment, he perceives many things in his conduct and conversation not exactly consistent with it, which he carefully endeavours to rectify: for indeed the same words and actions which once formed no impeachment of his sincerity in professing the gospel, would prove him a hypocrite, should he persist in them, when "more fully instructed in the ways of the "Lord."

The apostle before this had judged the Phillippians to be sincere believers: he was "confident that the "Lord, who had begun a good work in them, would "perform it until the day of Christ;—even as it was "meet, that he should think this of them all:"—but he prayed that this holy sincerity might be permanently manifested, and more exactly regulate all their professions and conduct towards God and man; that in all their words and actions they might be preserved pure from every tincture of dissimulation and hypocrisy.—And what believer will refuse to adopt this prayer for himself, and for all whose growth in grace he especially desires?—And who does not see, even among professors whom it would be very wrong wholly to condemn, many grievous mixtures of insincerity, real or apparent, the effect of ignorance, warm passions, strong attachments or prejudices, in-

* 2 Cor. vii. 10.

attention, a timid incapacity of giving a direct refusal, or the habit of exciting expectations by kind language and ambiguous expressions, without any real intention of answering them?

But the original word signifies *unmixed*, or purified from every thing that is debasing, like honey when thoroughly separated from the wax. It has, therefore, been thought, that the apostle referred to the simplicity of the consistent christian, as contrasted with the conduct of such as attempt to serve God and mammon; and endeavour to unite the interests, pursuits, and pleasures of the world, with those of religion, in defiance of our Lord's most solemn declaration that it is impossible. When a man appears devout in the place of worship, on the Lord's day, or in pious company, but acts like a worldly man in other circles, and on other occasions; when his religion falls almost wholly under human observation, and neither enters his closet, nor influences his conduct in his family, his dealings, or the use which he makes of his time and talents; when he loves to dispute about the truth, but manifests no improvement of disposition from his attachment to it; when he makes one, almost as regularly at the places of diversion, as at those of publick worship; or when he is religious with reserves, and only by fits and starts; he exhibits a melancholy and affecting sight to every truly pious mind. But to this too common character we may contrast the professor of the gospel, who maintains a consistent conduct in all places and companies, under the habitual impression of this thought, "Thou, God, seest me;" who "is in the fear of the Lord all the day long;" who

conducts his most ordinary concerns on the highest principles; who aims to fulfil the duties of every relation "heartily, as to the Lord and not unto men;" who seeks to have all his employments, possessions, and comforts, "sanctified by the word of God and "prayer;" who serves his Master in heaven, when engaged in his shop, in manual labour as a servant, and even in taking needful recreation; and endeavours to observe the apostle's direction, "Whether ye eat, "or whether ye drink, or whatever ye do, do all to "the glory of God." Religion constitutes such a man's business, interest, and pleasure; and by assigning to every thing its proper place, proportioning his attention to every object according to its value and importance, and arranging his secular concerns in due subordination and subserviency to the one thing needful, he renders every part of his conduct an act of cheerful obedience to the God of his salvation. It is probable, that no mere man completely answers this description: but it certainly comprises the substance of various scriptural exhortations, and accords to the commands and example of our blessed Lord.—Growth in grace must, therefore, especially consist in a continual approximation to this state of mind and tenor of conduct; and the disparity between our actual attainments and this proficiency in religion, should increase our earnestness in "pressing forward "to the mark, for the prize of our high calling of "God in Christ Jesus."

5. The apostle next adds, "that ye may be with-"out offence till the day of Christ;" and we may from this clause deduce another particular, connected

with the believer's growth in grace. The day of Christ, when he shall come to judgment, should be continually kept in view by all his disciples; and the scripture constantly calls our attention to it. Without any enquiry into the times and seasons, which the Lord hath been pleased to conceal, we may certainly know that "the Judge is at the door;" death will speedily transmit each of us to the tribunal of God; and if we be preserved without offence till death, we shall be also till the day of Christ.

The word translated *offence* denotes any thing laid in a man's path, over which he may stumble and fall. Numbers "stumble at the word being disobedient," and openly reject the gospel; some make a temporary profession, but by and by "they are *offended*, and in "time of temptation fall away;" and others prove an *offence* to their neighbours, by a conduct inconsistent with their avowed principles.—Should we suppose that St. Paul meant to intimate to the Philippians, that they would do well to distrust themselves, though he had expressed a strong confidence respecting them, it might suggest an useful instruction: for the christian who most grows in grace will be least disposed to rely on the favourable opinion of his brethren; knowing that they cannot discern the secrets of his heart, conscious of many inward evils that none suspect, and aware that brotherly love induces candour in judging others, and severity only towards ourselves. But the new convert, or declining professor, is apt to take vast encouragement from the good opinion of reputable christians, or eminent ministers: and it may seriously be apprehended that many rest

their confidence entirely on such testimonies, and finally deceive themselves; because they think it needless to regard the warnings of scripture, or the remonstrances of their own consciences, and refuse to "examine themselves whether they are in the faith," after having been approved by the disciples and ministers of Christ.

A man may stumble, however, who is not finally cast down. Judas alone fatally apostatized; but all the apostles were *offended*, when their Lord was delivered into the hands of sinful men. Many have stumbled, and fallen into grievous crimes, causing others to stumble also; and yet they have been renewed unto repentance, and finally saved. Whatever wise and holy reasons the Lord may have, in his unsearchable counsels, for permitting such things; his law, of "loving our neighbour as ourselves," is our rule of duty: and the believer, who understands and feels the genuine tendency of his principles, would, however assured of his own salvation, be ready to leave the world with groans and tears, on reflecting that his misconduct had emboldened the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, hardened some in impenitency, deceived others in an empty profession, exposed the gospel to prophane ridicule and reproach, and overwhelmed the friends of truth with grief and discouragement.

Our path through life is interspersed with stumbling-blocks, which Satan hath placed there, by means of infidels, hypocrites, apostates, deceivers, and inconsistent professors.—It behoves us, therefore, "to watch and be sober;" yet, unless the Lord keep us, we shall watch in vain: so that while we walk circum-

spectly and cautiously, we should pray without ceasing, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe;" and, while we carefully avoid every occasion of stumbling, we ought to use every precaution not to throw any stumbling-blocks in the way of our brethren. For this must be the consequence, if we imbibe, countenance, or propagate erroneous opinions; if we be drawn into any glaring indiscretion or inconsistency; if we yield to temptation in an unguarded hour; and even, if we do not carefully "avoid every appearance "of evil."

Nothing surely can be more desirable to an heir of salvation, than to pass the time of his sojourning in humble fear and circumspection; that he may bring no reproach on the gospel while he lives, and leave a testimony to the excellency of his character in the consciences of his survivors. Thus a man finally ratifies every thing he hath said and done to recommend the cause of Christ, during the whole course of his profession: "by well doing he puts to silence the ig-"norance of foolish men:" "being dead he yet "speaketh," and the recollection of his holy conversation perpetuates, and stamps a value on, his principles, when he can no longer endeavour to disseminate them.—In proportion to the degree of our genuine love to the Lord and his cause, the desire of thus living and dying must gain strength; and the consistent christian, in his deliberate judgment, would prefer death with credit, to the most prosperous life connected with becoming a disgrace to the gospel. This habitual disposition will render him more vigilant and circumspect, and especially more fervent in

prayer, that he may be preserved "without offence "until the day of Christ." On the contrary, when any who seem to be religious deem it a mark of proficiency, that they are freed from all concern about these things; when they really grow more lax in their conduct, and regardless what impressions it may make on others; it is evident that they are declining in grace, if not wholly destitute of divine life, whatever opinion they may form of themselves. The primitive churches were troubled with persons of this description, who counted it a proof of their knowledge, and a part of their liberty, to disregard expediency or propriety in using their privileges; and to please themselves, whatever might be the consequence. Thus they became *an offence* to their weak brethren, not walking charitably towards them. The apostle therefore exhorted them to "follow those "things which make for peace, and by which one "may edify another:" he declared, that "if meat "made his brother to *offend*, he would eat no flesh "while the world stood, lest he should make his bro-"ther to offend:" and he added, "Be ye followers of "me, even as I am of Christ." But who can doubt, that Paul was more advanced in grace, than the christians to whom he wrote? He was far more conformed to the mind that was in Christ, delivered from carnal self-love, inspired with zeal for the glory of God, filled with love to his brethren, and desirous of the salvation of sinners, than they were. Hence we may indisputably conclude, that *growth in grace* consists greatly in an increasing circumspection respecting our conduct, that we may avoid every cause of offence

laid in our way, and not prove an occasion of stumbling to others. And as our Lord has declared that "it is better for a man, that a mill-stone should be "hanged about his neck, and that he should be "drowned in the depths of the sea, than that he "should *offend one of the little ones* who believe in "him,"—how greatly ought we to dread such misconduct, as may prejudice numbers against the truth, and prove an occasion of their eternal ruin? It is to be feared, that few of us are wholly guiltless in this respect; and probably we shall find, on accurate self-examination, more cause for deep humiliation than we suspect.

But it would exceed the bounds assigned to this treatise, should the subject of *offences* be considered in a manner suitable to its importance: Yet, before we proceed further, it may be proper to call the reader's attention to that source of *scandals*, which our Lord hath especially selected, namely, *discords and contentions among his disciples*.* Bitter controversies among professors of the gospel; mutual accusations, if not invectives and slanders; appeals to the world *in print* of one party against another; and many other effects of pride, selfishness, and resentment, too common at this day, are not only deviations from the rules which our Lord hath prescribed in this case, but, diametrically opposite to them; and constitute offences of the most pernicious and lamentable kind. But growth in grace proportionably destroys the root of this bitterness; and renders men cautious not to disgrace the common cause, by an eagerness to vindicate

* Matt. xviii.

their own characters, secure their own interests, or expose the crimes of their opponents. It renders them averse to controversy when it can be avoided; and when constrained to contend for the truth, it dictates candour, meekness, modesty, and benevolence; mortifies the desire of victory and applause; and inspires zeal for the honour of God and the salvation of souls. It is, therefore, evident, that this is one important part of growth in grace, though it be seldom duly valued and inculcated.

6. The apostle concludes with these words, "That "ye may be filled with the fruits of righteousness, "which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory "of God:" and this evidently comprises another particular of great importance in this enquiry. The care, expence, and labour of planting, grafting, pruning, and tending the tree, have respect to the *fruit* expected from it; without which no man would be satisfied with its stately growth, redundant foliage, or beautiful blossoms. The whole plan of redemption, the humiliation and sufferings of the divine Saviour, the inspiration of the holy scriptures, the preaching of the gospel, and the instituted ordinances, are entirely designed to render men fruitful in good works; and if this end be not answered in those who profess the truth, the whole *as to them* has hitherto been ineffectual. "What could I "have done more to my vineyard that I have not "done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should "bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes."

Even the work of the Holy Spirit, in regenerating, illuminating, convincing, and comforting the soul, is entirely subservient to the Lord's design of rendering

it holy and fruitful: nor is any knowledge, experience, faith, joy, or confidence genuine, which is not connected with fruitfulness, or productive of it. "Every "tree, that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn "down and cast into the fire."

Whatever part of a believer's conduct tends to make known the glorious perfections and works of God, and to promote the credit of the gospel, the conversion of sinners, and the peace or purity of the church; whatever may diminish the sum total of ignorance, error, vice, and misery in the world, or increase that of true knowledge, wisdom, holiness, and felicity; in short, whatever does real good to mankind, in their temporal or spiritual concerns, is good fruit: all else should be counted but as leaves and blossoms. An upright, faithful, blameless, benevolent, peaceful, forgiving, pure, and holy conversation; a cheerful, thankful, resigned, and patient spirit; a reverential, and stated attendance on the ordinances of publick and family worship; a conscientious regard to the will of God, in our dealings with men, and in our behaviour towards all who are in any way related to us, even when they neglect their reciprocal duties; and an habitual moderation, in all the pursuits, interests, and pleasures of life, have a manifest tendency thus to adorn our profession and benefit mankind. To these we may add a faithful improvement of the talents committed to our stewardship; whatever measure of authority, influence, abilities, learning, or riches, may be assigned to us by our common Master: for with such talents we may do proportionable good; provided we be influenced by evangelical principles, avail our-

selves of advantages and opportunities, and ask wisdom of God to direct us in our endeavours. All those liberal acts of piety and charity, which christians perform with that portion of their time, attention, or property, that others waste or abuse, are fruits of righteousness, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. And when we connect with these things, an holy boldness in professing the truth, and constancy, cheerfulness, and meekness, in suffering for it; we have the general out-lines of Christian fruitfulness.

The good ground "brought forth fruit, some thir-"ty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold." All believers are in some measure fruitful, when their principles have had time to produce the proper effect: but the apostle prayed for his beloved people, "that "they might be filled with the fruits of righteous-"ness." He earnestly desired, that they might produce all the fruits of the Spirit,* in a degree fully adequate to their abilities and opportunities; that none of their talents might be buried or misemployed, nor any thing neglected, or left unattempted, by which they might glorify God and do good to men. We cannot think ourselves perfect *in this life*, without being justly chargeable with pride; nor can we neglect to pray for perfection and follow after it, without criminal negligence, and toleration of sin in our hearts and lives.

Professors of the gospel too often resemble those trees, which must be very carefully examined, before it can be determined, whether they bear any fruit or

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* Gal. v. 22, 23.

no. But the apostle could not be satisfied with such ambiguous characters; he wished to see his people, like such fruit-trees as attract the notice and admiration of every traveller, while at one glance he sees all the branches loaded with the valuable produce.—It must then be manifest that the increase of fruitfulness is one essential branch of the believer's growth in grace; nay indeed, that all the other particulars are principally important because of their subserviency to this grand object. This might be more copiously proved and illustrated, but it seems too obvious to require it. Our Lord declares, he had "chosen "and ordained his apostles, that they should bring "forth fruit, and that their fruit should remain:" and whoever duly considers the instruction conveyed by the parable of the vine and the branches, will be ready to conclude, that no man is a living branch of that true Vine, who does not bring forth more and more fruit, during his continuance in this world; and will at least determine, that when the reverse takes place, the individual's state and character become proportionably ambiguous.

We have now followed the apostle through the several petitions of this important prayer; intending to reserve the concluding words to be considered in the application of the subject. We shall therefore here close this division of the treatise with the words of the apostle to the same Philippians: "Finally, bre-"thren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things "are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever "things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, what-"soever things are of good report,—if there be any

" virtue, if there be any praise, think of these things.
" Those things, which ye have both learned, and re-
" ceived, and heard, and seen in me, do, and the God
" of peace shall be with you."*

* Phil. iv. 8, 9.

SECTION II.

Additional observations on the nature and effects of growth in grace, as deducible from other scriptures.

WHILE we attempt to inculcate those practical subjects, which have been enlarged on in the preceding part of this treatise, some may perhaps fear lest we should draw men from the simplicity of dependence on free grace, by faith in the righteousness and atonement of the divine Saviour. On this account, therefore, as well as for other reasons, it may be expedient to subjoin a few more particulars, in which growth in grace consists, and by which it may be ascertained, both in respect of its reality and degree.

I. Genuine growth in grace is always accompanied with proportionable *humiliation*, and the habitual exercise of repentance. This hath indeed been implied and intimated in every part of our progress: but it is a matter of so great importance, and creates such difficulty to many persons, that a more explicit consideration of it seems necessary. An enlightened understanding, a tender conscience, with quick sensibility of sin, and abhorrence of it; a submissive will, and fervent spiritual affections, combine in what is here called *grace*, and the *growth of grace*. But

clearer and more distinct views of the divine majesty and greatness must proportionably abate our self-importance, and render us little, and, as it were, nothing in our own eyes. Fuller discoveries of the holiness, justice, mercy, and truth of God, and of the glory and beauty of his harmonious perfections as displayed in the person of Christ, must show us more and more the intrinsick evil of sin, and the heinousness of our own transgressions: and the same defects or defilements must give us proportionably greater uneasiness, than they did when we had less sensibility and spirituality. Thus, self-abhorrence, on account of present sinfulness, must increase with our growth in holiness. The habit also of comparing every part of our temper and conduct with the perfect law of God and the example of Christ, instead of judging ourselves by other rules, tends to bring us more acquainted with the hidden evils of our hearts, and the sins of our lives which once were unnoticed, and even unsuspected: as well as to show the imperfection of our duties. That intimate communion with God, which accompanies growth in grace, must make us more sensible of our sinfulness; and even the company of eminent christians tends to abate our self-confidence, to cover us with shame, and to excite us to deep repentance, from the consciousness how far we fall beneath them. Every discovery of the glory of redemption by the cross of Christ, and of the immensity of our obligations to his love, tends to make us dissatisfied with our present measure of obedience, and to humble us under the consciousness of multipled instances of ingratitude to our Benefactor. So that, while there

is any alloy of sin in the heart of a regenerate person, his self-abhorrence and humiliation before God for it must bear proportion to the degree of his actual proficiency in holiness. No proof *that a sinner is become pure in heart* is so unequivocal, as his groans and tears on account of his remaining pollution, while it appears less and less in his external conduct: yet this often occasions dejection, when not attended with a clear understanding of that sanctifying work, by which the Holy Spirit seals believers to the day of redemption; and would always produce this effect, were it not for the discoveries made of the entire freeness and inexhaustible riches of divine grace, to all that flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them.— Thus, when holy Paul abounded in grace, and was fruitful in good works, probably above any man on earth, he was more humbled before God than others; not only for his former rebellions as "the chief of "sinners," but also in respect of his present character and services, he spake of himself as "less than "the least of all saints." It is not necessary to expatiate particularly on the well known examples of Job, Isaiah, Daniel, or the centurion whom our Lord commended: as all who diligently consider the subject, are well acquainted with their actual attainments and unaffected humility.

This increase of humility never fails to produce a proportionable disposition to condescension, courteousness, and modesty; a willingness to take the lowest place, "in honour preferring others to ourselves;" and a satisfaction of mind in obscure stations, or with ordinary services, if they be allotted to us. The be-

liever gradually acquires such a view of himself and his misconduct during a succession of years, that he "remembers and is confounded, and never opens his "mouth any more for his shame, when the LORD is "pacified to him for all that he hath done."* This abates the propensity to boast, revile, censure, and complain, which is inseparable from our depraved nature, except by divine grace: and produces lowliness, meekness, candour, resignation, contentment, and gratitude, in the habitual frame of his temper and tenor of his conduct.—If then any person's growth, in other respects, be accompanied with evident pride, ambition, ostentation, contention, arrogance, boasting, and bitterness; we must conclude his apparent graces to be counterfeits, and not the real fruits of the Spirit: for "this wisdom is not from above, but "is earthly, sensual, and devilish." Indeed unless such proficiency be accompanied with an evident increase in tenderness, modesty, and gentleness; with a readiness to submit to conviction and to be very sorry for every fault, and with a disposition to be more and more resigned under contempt and neglect; a man's growth in grace cannot be clearly ascertained. "Be "ye clothed with humility," is an exhortation to the most arduous attempt and the most exalted attainment, to which man is capable of aspiring. Pride is the most offensive to God of all sins: a proud holiness is therefore self-contradictory; for no grace can subsist except by connexion with humility; and the idea, that exhortations to christian tempers and evan-

* Ezek. xvi. 63.

gelical fruitfulness tend to render men proud, arises from an entire misapprehension concerning the very nature of that "holiness, without which no man shall "see the Lord."

The exercise of grace, or diligence in duty, may indeed prove an occasion of pride to a believer; and so may the knowledge of evangelical truth, or even self-abasement and contrition in any remarkable degree. But then true grace continually counteracts these emotions; and the *root* of pride is gradually weakened even by means of these rank but unallowed *buddings;* as Hezekiah was "humbled for the pride "of his heart." The vigorous exercise, therefore, of *holy* affections must eventually produce deep humiliation: whereas gifts, high and false affections, lifeless notions, ostentatious services, and an unholy zeal for evangelical truth, not only allow the branches of pride to shoot forth luxuriantly, but water and nourish the root of that hateful propensity.

II. The increase of *faith*, in all it's varied exercises, is an essential part of growth in grace. If faith be "belief of the truth," or 'a disposition to credit 'implicitly the testimony of God in his word;' we easily perceive that all true religion begins and increases with it. Unless we thus believe the testimony of God, we can neither fear his wrath, "as "revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and "unrighteousness of men," nor regard his warnings, nor understand the nature and value of his salvation:—We can neither accept of his invitations, rely on his promises, give up present objects for better things in reversion, nor render the willing obedi-

ence of grateful love. It is impossible therefore to be saved without faith; because we shall certainly neglect the great salvation revealed in scripture, if we do not believe the record of God concerning it, and indeed there is no conceivable way of deriving benefit from revelation, except by believing it.—It is also manifest, that the more fully we are acquainted with revealed truths, and the more firmly we credit them, without vain reasonings or sceptical hesitations; and the more entirely we realize to our minds the awful and affecting scenes thus presented to our view; the greater degree of every holy affection, the more decided victory over the love of the world and the dread of the cross, the deeper compassion for perishing sinners, and the firmer attachment to the cause and people of God, will be produced. Faith at first works principally by fear and hope, and afterwards by love: the increase of faith therefore must increase the energy of these active principles, and of every affection dependent on them.

On the other hand, growth in grace strengthens faith, and habituates the soul to a realizing contemplation of invisible objects, to a deep sense of their importance and of our intimate concern in them, and to a decided preference of eternal things above all the interests of this transient scene.—Thus the believer faints not,—for "he looks not to the things which are seen, "but to the things which are not seen." He learns with Abraham, to part with objects which nature most endears to him, when the will of God requires them; believing him able to make up every loss: and, with Moses, he is enabled to count "the reproach of Christ

" greater riches than the treasures" of the world, and " affliction with the people of God," preferable to the momentary " pleasures of sin,—enduring as one who " sees him that is invisible."

If we consider faith as including the idea of dependence, or committing ourselves to the Lord's hands in credence and confidence; the increase of it is inseparable from growth in grace. The convinced sinner discovers, perhaps gradually, that he has no resources in himself, and possesses no ability of escaping the wrath to come: but, hearing of the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, and of the encouragements and promises of the new covenant, he seeks for the grace of his free salvation. As his views enlarge, he more expressly entrusts his soul and all his eternal interests into the hands of Christ, and expects the supply of all his wants from his unsearchable riches. Thus he learns " to live by " the faith of the Son of God," and, feeling that he deserves only wrath, to expect every blessing through the atonement of his blood, and as the gift of his grace. He has not yet, however, obtained a very deep acquaintance with the evil of sin, the aggravations of his own iniquities, the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the human heart, or his own helpless and exposed condition: so that, attending diligently on the means of grace, he hopes speedily to rise superior to every temptation, and to *feel himself* advancing in holiness every day; and in this he commonly experiences a mortifying disappointment, even when actually growing in grace. For he continually discovers evil in his heart and duties, which he did not at all suspect, and has painful experience of his own weakness and folly. Many a sharp

conflict, and many an evident relapse into evil, tend to convince him that "he can do nothing of himself;" and he escapes well if he be not so baffled by temptation, as to act inconsistently in some degree before men, whilst the Lord "humbles him, and proves him, and shews "him what is in his heart, to do him good at the lat-"ter end."* In this way, however, after a course of years, when he has really grown in grace, and is justly regarded as an established, honourable, and fruitful christian; he is so far from feeling less need of supplies from the Saviour's fulness, that he depends on him more simply and explicitly for every thing, than he did at the first. He more entirely "counts all but loss, "that he may win Christ and be found in him, and in "his righteousness;" and continually seeks forgiveness of his daily sins and the acceptance of his daily services, by faith in his blood. He now considers the inclination, ability, and opportunity, of doing good works, as so many gifts from the God of grace, increasing more and more his obligations; and is deeply conscious, that he hath not duly improved his talents. He is also entirely sensible, that he cannot perform any good work in future, or withstand the temptations which obstruct his progress, without supplies of wisdom and strength day by day, out of that same fulness, from which he has so long been accustomed to receive. Thus his growth in grace is connected with proportionable simplicity in the exercise of faith: and our Lord plainly declares, that the habitual simplicity and energy of faith in him, secures the growth of grace

* Deut. viii. 2.

when he says "he that abideth in me, the same bringeth "forth much fruit."

The consistent believer learns likewise to consider every object that surrounds him, in its relation to the providence, the moral government, or the salvation of God; and this induces a constant dependence on him even in the common affairs of life. He "acknowledges "God in all his ways:" he relies on him to incline the hearts of those with whom he is concerned to act properly towards him;* to succeed his undertakings, to protect him in danger, to supply his wants, and to comfort and deliver him in trouble. He depends on the perfections and providence of God to fulfil his promises in these respects, as far as conducive to his good; being assured that not a sparrow falls to the ground without his Father's notice and design. He considers the power of God as engaged to restrain the malice and rage of Satan, to moderate his trials, and to preserve him from circumstances of overwhelming temptation; as well as his grace to strengthen holy affections and give energy for resistance. Thus he passes through one difficulty after another; conscious of his weakness, but relying on the Lord for strength and protection; he casts his care on him, and "in ev-"ery thing, by prayer and supplication with thanks-"giving, makes his requests known to God:" while his experience of the Lord's faithfulness and attention to his prayers tend to increase his faith, to encourage his expectations, and to exclude anxious alarms or

* Neh. i. 11.

distrustful solicitudes. And this prepares him for at length passing through the valley of the shadow of death "without fearing any evil;" trusting that the Lord will then be with him, as his Guide, Guard, and Comforter, and at last receive him to his eternal glory.

The increase of faith in this respect must be a most important part of growth in grace, as it produces a calm submissive spirit in the most perilous and distressing seasons; when the hearts of unbelievers, and even of the weak in faith, "are shaken like the "trees by the wind:" it induces an habitual intercourse, in the spirit of adoption between the redeemed sinner and his reconciled God and Father; as he now walks with God in humble confidence, and reverential fear. It likewise secures a man from seeking relief in trouble by indirect means; and renders him watchful against every thing that would interrupt his communion with God, by which his present comfort and hopes of future felicity are principally maintained. And, on the other hand, as he grows in grace he will attain to greater simplicity of dependence on God, which will render him less dependent on men and on second causes; he will be less affected by the fluctuating appearances of external affairs, "his heart being "fixed trusting in the Lord:" and will more uniformly consider all creatures as his instruments of judgment or of mercy, of correction, or of comfort; and remember that "all things work together for good to "them that love God." Thus it appears, that growth in grace, as to the various particulars comprised in the apostle's prayer for the philippians, will certainly

be accompanied with deeper humility, stronger faith, and more entire reliance on God in all things pertaining to this life, and to that which is to come.

It cannot, therefore, be doubtful to any impartial enquirer in what a believer's growth in grace consists. When a man abounds more and more in all the varied exercises of holy love; when this love is directed and regulated by increasing knowledge, wisdom, and judgment; when he acquires by exercise, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, the habit of prudently examining and accurately distinguishing between things that differ, abhorring the evil, and cleaving to the good, more entirely and heartily from day to day; when he grows more known and approved for sincerity and integrity in all his professions and engagements, and more singly devoted to God, as he advances in years; when he becomes more and more circumspect in his words and works, that he may neither inadvertently fall himself, or cause others to stumble, and more fervent in prayer to be preserved from bringing any reproach on the gospel to the end of his course; when he grows more abundantly fruitful in the works of righteousness, while at the same time he lies lower before God in deep humility, and is more willing than ever to be abased among men; when he acts more and more habitually with the invisible God and the eternal world before his mind, and relies more entirely on the mercy and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, who thus becomes more precious to his soul; and when his dependence on the providence of God is more uniform, and accompanied with greater composure, submission, and

constancy in the path of duty: when this is the case, nothing material to the christian character seems wanting; the various holy dispositions and affections, resulting from regeneration, are advancing to maturity in just proportion and coincidence, and the believer is evidently ripening for the work, worship, and joy of heaven.

CONCLUSION.

THE apostle having prayed that the Philippians "might be filled with the fruits of righteousness," subjoined, according to the uniform language of the New Testament, "which are through Jesus Christ to "the glory and praise of God." Our fruitfulness is utterly insufficient to justify us, or recommend us to the divine favour; and we are not allowed to court the applause of men, in the performance of good works. But "the fruits of the Spirit," produced by his sacred influence from the hearts of fallen creatures, as the happy effects of the incarnation and redemption of Christ presented through his intercession, and as it were sprinkled with his blood; and as conducive in all respects to the glory of God, they must be well pleasing in his sight. We are thus consecrated "an "holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices, accepta- "ble to God through Jesus Christ;" "and hereby "he is glorified, when we bring forth much fruit."— This consideration leads us to enquire more particularly into the reasons which induced the apostle to pray thus for his people: and on what account that growth in grace, which has been described, is so greatly to be desired.

It is observable that no petitions are offered by the apostle in the passage referred to for prosperity, de-

liverance from persecutors, or even spiritual consolation. In general it is not proper to pray unreservedly for temporal comforts in behalf of ourselves or others; for they are of so ambiguous a nature that we cannot tell whether they would prove blessings or not. John indeed wishes his beloved Gaius may "be in "health, and prosper, even as his soul prospered!" A singular example! and a petition that must be reversed to suit the case of many professed christians! No doubt St. Paul prayed that his people might be delivered from "the tribulations and persecutions which "they endured:" and that "their hearts might be "*comforted*, being knit together in love:" but, when he expressly set himself to point out the things, which he principally requested in their behalf, in order to direct them in seeking the best blessings for themselves, he was silent on these topicks. We may therefore observe,

1. That growth in grace is necessary in order to the believer's abiding consolation, assurance of hope. It may probably have occurred to the reader, that assurance of an interest in Christ, and of everlasting life through him, has not been expressly mentioned as essential to growth in grace or strength of faith: but as we are exhorted "to give all diligence, that we "may make our calling and election *sure;*" and "that "we may possess the full *assurance* of hope unto the "end;" we may properly consider genuine confidence as the *effect* of increasing faith and sanctification.* Without a measure of holiness there can be no war-

*2 Pet. i. 10. Heb. vi. 10—12.

ranted comfort, or *assurance of hope*. Strong cordials, indeed, given to a man in a high fever may produce a transient exhilaration, while they increase the disease: but proper medicines tend to restore health, which will be accompanied with more pleasing sensations, and of a more permanent nature.—Now sin is the distemper of the soul: and while pride, malice, lust, covetousness, or any other vile passion prevails in the heart, no salutary comfort can be derived from the promises or privileges of the gospel; except as they allure a man from his present seducing and destructive pursuits, by shewing him that far greater blessings are attainable. But when a humble, meek, pure, and heavenly disposition is produced; when knowledge, love, submission, and spirituality diffuse their benign influence; subjugating every corrupt passion, and moderating every attachment to earthly objects,—the believer consequently feels peace and comfort: while the joys, which on some occasions fill and transport the soul in an extraordinary manner, are chiefly reserved for times of sharp conflict, heavy trials, or hard services.

All our genuine consolations spring from the influences of the Holy Spirit, opening to us the treasures of redeeming love, applying to our consciences the blood of sprinkling, exciting holy affections in our hearts, and giving us earnests of heavenly felicity. They are therefore inseparably connected with the exercises of repentance, faith, love, hope, and gratitude, and indeed greatly consist in them: while every kind or degree of sin, even in our tempers or desires, grieves and quenches the Spirit of God, and inter-

rupts our comforts; till renewed humiliation, and application for mercy, through the blood of Christ, restore our peace. It must therefore be evident, that growth in grace powerfully tends to establish peace, hope, and joy in God; a "peace of God which passeth understanding," a "joy unspeakable and glorious." We ought to value these consolations above all the riches and pleasures of the world, and desire the abundant enjoyment of them from day to day: but we should not expect, or allow ourselves to wish for it, except through the medium of increasing sanctification and fruitfulness. Upon the most mature deliberation, the prudent christian will not hesitate to pray, that the loss of wonted consolations may chastise his folly, if he grow lukewarm, careless or worldly: and that, if the only wise God see that with-holding present comfort will promote his growth in grace, he may be sanctified and not comforted, rather than comforted and not sanctified. Present joys are of short continuance, but increasing holiness is the recovery of health, and the preparation for future and eternal felicity. Our Lord hath commanded us to "seek "*first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness;" and then "all other things will be added to us:" but numbers by inverting this order come short of salvation, and soon lose their idolized worldly objects. In like manner many professors of the gospel are so eager to obtain assurance, that they seek it in the *first* place, instead of first seeking to grow in grace and to bring forth the fruits of righteousness, leaving it to the Lord to give them comfort, and to cause them to "abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost,"

in his appointed time and way: and thus many are buoyed up in vain confidence, or amused with delusive joys; and others continue feeble, sickly, and dejected, during the greatest part of their lives. Various methods have indeed been devised to afford them relief and consolation; but they have merely a transient effect: for the child that does not grow is not healthy, and being unhealthy will be uncomfortable, whatever may be done to cheer its spirits by cordials, to feast it with delicacies, or to amuse it by toys and finery.

2. Growth in grace is most desirable, in order that the Lord Jesus may be glorified in us, and by us.—When Christ appeared on earth, all those who saw the men whom he had restored to the use of their senses and limbs, recovered to health, or raised from the dead, would have reason to exclaim with astonishment, 'See what Jesus of Nazareth hath done! 'how wonderful is his power! how great his love! 'how many, how stupendous, how benificent his 'miracles!'—While the monuments of his divine compassion and authority over all nature would be ready to say to all around them, 'He whom the rulers 'and scribes despise and seek to destroy, restored my 'limbs, my understanding, or my life.'—Thus would he be honoured by them, and in them.

When they, who profess the doctrines of the gospel, and avouch Christ to be their God, and Saviour, make it incontestably evident, that their tempers are sanctified, their lusts mortified, their selfish hearts enlarged, and their characters sound, pure, and holy: all who knew them before, will be constrained to notice the change, to wonder at the effects, and to en-

quire into the cause.—'What hath transformed the 'brier into a myrtle, the lion into a lamb, or the 'swine into a sheep?' and the persons who have experienced this change, by professing their faith in Christ, give him all the glory. Thus the nature and tendency of the gospel, and the excellency of its fruits, are manifested: the Lord, as it were, challenges men to come and examine the work which he hath wrought, and to say, whether it be not worthy of admiration and honour? This is the best method of confuting infidelity, and constraining iniquity to stop her mouth; and "the fruits of righteousness" which believers produce, prove, "through Jesus Christ, to "the praise and glory of God," as they tend to make known his glorious perfections, and promote the cause of his holy religion among mankind.

But "woe be to the world because of offences;" and "woe be to him by whom the offence cometh." The crimes of professed christians render our holy religion odious and contemptible to millions in all the quarters of the globe, and give infidels their most plausible arguments against it. The crimes of hypocrites, who contend for the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, prejudice the minds of multitudes in every part of this land: and, alas! the misconduct of true believers, who do not feel sufficiently the necessity of growing in grace, produces in a measure the same lamentable effects. We ought therefore to pray more for ourselves and each other, that the Lord who hath set us apart for himself, would make us to be "unto "him for a name, and a praise;" "that our conver- "sation may be such as becometh the gospel of

" Christ;" that we may walk worthy of God, who " hath called us to his kingdom and glory;" and that we may put those to shame and silence, " who would " speak against us as evil-doers."

The apostle instructs Titus to exhort servants " to " be obedient to their own masters, and to please " them well in all things, not answering again, not " purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they " may *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all* " *things:*" and the same argument is equally cogent in respect of every instance of good behaviour, in those who profess the gospel. Nothing indeed can add to the beauty and glory of divine truth, as it is in its own nature: but this can be discerned by the spiritual mind alone; to the world in general it appears foolish and absurd, and the misconduct of such as profess evangelical truth, confirms despisers in their proud contempt of it. There is however an excellency in a truly christian temper and conversation, which they are not hardy enough to deny, and of which they frequently have the fullest demonstration, in the advantage or comfort which they derive from it.

One talkative, imprudent, and inconsistent zealot for the doctrines of the gospel, who neither knows nor practises the duties of his station, but is habitually guilty of manifest crimes or glaring improprieties, will expose the truth to the contempt of a whole family, a village, or even a neighbourhood. But a single christian matured in grace according to the sketch here given, notwithstanding incidental failures and mani-

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* 1 Pet. iii. 1—7.

fold infirmities of which he is humbly conscious, will obtain a testimony in the consciences of all his connexions, and win upon their hearts; he will soften the prejudices, silence the reproaches, and live down the contempt of the circle in which he moves; and evangelical truth will acquire such a respectability in a neighbourhood, where consistent christians are numerous, as none can properly conceive who have not actually witnessed it.

3. This must be allowed to have a powerful tendency to make known the salvation of Christ. All that love the gospel desire to spread it: but many attempt it in a very improper manner, thinking that they ought to dispute for the truth with every body to whom they have access, or that at all events they must become preachers of the word. No doubt it is very commendable to contend earnestly for the truth; and what zealous christian does not pray, that the Lord would increase an hundred fold the faithful ministers of the gospel, how many soever they be?—But perhaps the cause of truth would be no loser, if we had much less disputing, and even rather less preaching *of some kinds:* provided we had more of those, who preach to all around them in the silent energy of an holy life; after the manner, in which Peter exhorts wives to preach to their unbelieving husbands.* Every word that persons of this character drop, whether of serious reproof and exhortation, or in ordinary discourse, and every persuasion to read a book, or hear a sermon, would have great weight, and in some instances success: whilst, "Physician heal thyself," is a

* 1 Pet iii. 1—7.

sufficient answer to the most zealous unholy disputer. —Nay, it may reasonably be supposed, that a faithful minister of very slender talents, who lives consistently with the holy doctrine which he delivers, and is attended by a few persons whose conduct do credit to the gospel, will in the event be more solidly and durably useful, than the most popular speaker, who is either lax in his own conduct, or surrounded by admirers who are a reproach to his doctrine.

It pleases God on some occasions, to revive religion by numerous apparent conversions, and in a very rapid manner: yet this will soon die away, and continue at most only for a single generation, if holiness do not shine in the lives of those concerned. But more commonly the cause of God diffuses its influence like the leaven, and like the grain of mustard-seed, almost insensibly from small beginnings to a great increase. When the work is genuine, and the profession accords to the specimens given in the New Testament, the holy flame kindles from heart to heart, in families and neighbourhoods: and one after another is won over, even without the word, by the conversation of friends and relatives, while they behold and benefit by their consistent conduct. This we should desire and pray for in our several circles; and would we adopt the right method of succeeding in it we must "let our light shine "before men, that they may see our good works, and "glorify our heavenly Father."

4. It is also most desirable, that the knowledge of the gospel should be continued to our posterity. Holy men of God have always paid a great regard to the religious interests of succeeding generations; and with

this view redoubled their diligent and zealous endeavours, when they were about to leave the world.—Thus, Moses, Joshua, David, Paul, and Peter, had the same "mind in them, which was also in Christ "Jesus." The true believer longs especially, that his children and children's children, with those of his relatives and friends, may from generation to generation be the supports and ornaments of the gospel. In condescending regard to such desires, the Lord hath mentioned these blessings in the covenant he makes with us, assuring us that it is intended "for our good and "for that of our children after us:" yet none, but such christians as have been described, can reasonably expect to be thus favoured. Their example and instructions, their testimony for God and his truth, living and dying; and the reputation which they often acquire after death, however slighted before, plead powerfully in behalf of religion, in the consciences of those whom they leave behind. As they have honoured God, he will thus honour them, by answering their prayers and prospering their endeavours: and if they leave any of their children or beloved relatives in an unconverted state; they may even at their departure possess a peaceful hope, that the Lord will yet think upon them for good, and at length gather them into his fold, perhaps by means of their dying exhortations. In general, however, it is certain, that christianity of this kind is not easily or speedily eradicated: the fruit produced by such believers, as have here been imperfectly described, will remain in its effects from generation to generation; and indeed, in one respect or another, to the end of the world and to all eternity. "All the na-

" tions of the earth shall be blessed in him," saith the Lord concerning Abraham; " for I know him that he " will command his children and his household after " him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to " do justice and judgment; *that the Lord may bring* " *upon Abraham, that which he hath spoken of* " *him.*"*

5. Growth in grace is peculiarly desirable, in order that we may possess an assured hope and strong consolation at the approach of death. This last enemy is indeed the king of terrors, in his original nature and consequences: and though he is disarmed of his sting, when he approaches as a friend to release the believer from his uneasy situation in this evil world, and convey him to his Father's house, yet our nature is apt to recoil: and when faith and hope waver, we cannot but look forward to the solemn season with trembling anxiety. Indeed, were we sure of having one day of spiritual light and comfort, and no more, during our continuance on earth, it would be very desirable to reserve that cordial for this last season of conflict. But a lax and slothful conduct, even if gross sins are avoided, prepares distress for the closing scene; and the christian who habitually yields to indolence, or, in other words, does not grow in grace, makes, as it were, an assignation with terror to meet him on his death-bed: while, on the other hand, evangelical principles, a " conversation becoming our profession," and diligence in our proper work and in the great business of religion, constitute an habitual and actual preparation

* Gen. xviii. 18, 19.

for that solemn sene. Our loins are thus girded, our lamps burning, and we are like men who are waiting for the coming of their Lord. We may not indeed before hand be able wholly to discard our apprehensions; nor ought we to perplex ourselves on that account: but we are indisputably safe; and at whatever time, or manner we may be summoned hence, that day will not over-take us as a thief, with terrible surprise, or fatal consequences but we shall be graciously addressed in these most condescending words, " Well done " good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of " thy Lord."

It would be wholly superfluous to speak particularly concerning the day of judgment in this enquiry; but we may very properly close it with the apostle's words to the Philippians; " Be blameless and harm- " less, as the sons of God, without rebuke, in the " midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among " whom *shine ye* as lights in the world; holding forth " the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of " Christ that I have not run in vain, neither laboured " in vain."*

If the things we have considered, be indeed the principles of the gospel reduced to practice, and accord to their genuine tendency, what an excellent religion is christianity! how base must they be, who oppose, insult, and reproach it, for the faults of many

* Phil. ii. 15, 16.

of its professors! and how inexcusable are those persons who give them such an occasion!—It is indeed a most palpable falsehood to pretend that the doctrines of grace diminish our obligations to obedience, or supersede the necessity of good works: but the holy lives of those who embrace them is the best, and in fact the only effectual, confutation of this slander. —If then the advantages and consequences of growth in grace be so important, and the nature of it so evident, little need be said concerning the way in which we ought to seek so great and desirable a blessing. The motives and encouragements of the gospel are abundantly sufficient, to animate those who duly attend to them; we have free access to the throne of grace; exceedingly great and precious promises to plead with our merciful God and Father, and an inexhaustible fulness from which to draw all things "pertaining to life and godliness." We are directed and commanded to "ask and receive, that our joy "may be full:" God hath appointed various means, which he hath engaged to render effectual to all those who diligently attend on them in humble faith; and every person may soon learn for himself, if he duly watch and keep his own heart, what employments or companions prove helps or hindrances to his soul, in this grand concern. Could we therefore succeed in convincing men that it is possible even in this world, to arrive at degrees of spirituality, fruitfulness, and stability, far beyond what is commonly attained; that it is their bounden duty to "press forward—forget-"ting the things which are behind, and reaching for-"ward to the things which are before;" that they

have great cause for deep humiliation, on account of their unfruitfulness in times past, and yet ought not to be discouraged from expecting more effectual help in their future endeavours: if, I say, men could be thus induced, heartily to set themselves to seek and pray for more abundant growth in grace, as the most important and desirable of all blessings; there can be no doubt, but they would make greater progress than they generally do. Yet christians would not on that account become better satisfied with themselves, or their attainments. Perhaps, through self-acquaintance, tenderness of conscience, and deep humility, they might not be sensible of making any advances in grace: and assuredly they would more and more hunger and thirst after righteousness, till they come to the fountain above, when they shall drink, and thirst no more for ever. But to such persons the words of the apostle are peculiarly suitable and encouraging. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, "unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the "Lord: forasmuch as ye know, that your labour is "not in vain in the Lord."*—"Now the God of "peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord "Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through "the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us per-"fect in every good work to do his will, working in "us that which is well pleasing in his sight, through "Jesus Christ, to whom be glory, for ever and ever. "Amen."

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* 1 Cor. xv. 58.

HINTS

FOR THE CONSIDERATION

OF

PATIENTS

IN

HOSPITALS.

THESE hints, with very few and obvious variations, may equally apply to the case of patients attending dispensaries; or sick persons of every description, especially such as are receiving any kind of charitable assistance.—The reader is desired to peruse carefully the several Scriptures recommended at the bottom of the pages, as peculiarly suited to explain and enforce the instructions which are given.

HINTS, &c.

THE word of God requires us, "in the day of adversity to *consider*."* This is with you, my friends a day of adversity; and I shall be happy, if you will permit me to lead you to the due consideration of those subjects, which are more immediately seasonable, and profitable, in *your present* situation.—You cannot but observe the eagerness with which the diseased apply for relief from their bodily complaints! Though the condition of patients in hospitals, or indeed of the sick when under cure in other places, cannot be rendered agreeable; and though the means of recovery are often very irksome and painful; yet the dread of death, and the desire of health, render men in general earnest to put themselves under the care of physicians, or to procure letters of admission into hospitals; and willing to submit to those methods of cure which are deemed necessary. But after all, how uncertain and transient is the expected relief! How vain and troublesome the life thus prolonged! How soon must we all yield to the stroke of death!—

* Eccles. vii. 14. See Job . 6—8.

The continuance of our lives is sure to be the lengthening of our temporal sufferings; and too often men so employ returning health, that by means of it they only "treasure up for themselves wrath against the "day of wrath."

But an eternal state awaits us! A future judgment, and its dreadful or delightful consequences! And who is there that has not committed many sins, or does not feel a proneness to that which is evil, and a backwardness to what is good?—Yet with what indifference do men receive the instructions of heavenly wisdom! How little pains are they willing to bestow, in learning or walking in, the way which leads to everlasting life! Nay, how negligent to flee from the wrath to come, and to seek deliverance from endless misery!

The aim and intention of physicians, surgeons, and other medical assistants are readily understood: and they who refuse to comply with their directions, however painful and self-denying, are deemed obstinate enemies to themselves: but the design of those who, by counsel or books, would promote the eternal good of the sufferers, is scarcely perceived; their labour of love is thought needless, if not impertinent! Too often men turn away with disgust or resentment; and seldom do they give themselves much trouble, or bestow a tolerable measure of pains, about those infinitely important concerns! "But beloved, I hope bet-"ter things of you;" and must beg you to consider, that I am as certainly using the proper means, which, by God's blessing, may be effectual for your eternal salvation; as your kind and humane physicians are using the proper means of restoring your health, and

prolonging your lives. Let me then propose to your most serious attention the following short Hints on a subject of infinite importance.

1. You should *consider* that affliction is not a thing which comes of course, or by chance; but it springs from the holy and righteous abhorrence with which God beholds iniquity; and is under his immediate direction and appointment.

When God had created man *in his own image*, and pronounced him very good; in addition to the law written in his heart, he laid on him one single restraint, amidst those blessings with which he was surrounded; adding this threatening; "In the day that "thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." When, through Satan's temptation, he had eaten the forbidden fruit, the sentence in part was pronounced in these words, "Dust thou art, and to dust shalt thou re-"turn." The consequence evidently proves our concern in this transaction.* "By one man sin entered "into the world, and death by sin, and so death pass-"ed upon all men, in that all have sinned." At that, awful season man became a distempered, dying creature: his sentence is executed in a gradual manner; and every pain and disease which we feel forms a part of that execution, is the beginning of death, and the forerunner of the last fatal stroke. We should therefore, under afflictions, *consider*, submit to, and adore, the justice of God in them; reflect upon his holy hatred of sin displayed in these dispensations, and endeavour to affect our hearts with a sense of its malignity, that

* Read Gen. iii. and Rom. v.

we may deeply repent, and abhor our own iniquities. And, as in Christ the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, we are dealt with as under a dispensation of mercy; we ought also to consider the *goodness* of God in our sufferings; his patience in bearing so long with us; his kindness in warning us by merciful chastisements, instead of cutting us off in our sins; and his tenderness in chastising us so gently, in comparison of our deservings, and the sufferings which many others endure.

2. You should from your present affliction take occasion to consider, that if these first fruits of sin are so bitter, what the misery in another world will be of those who die in their sins? The pains which you feel, the death which you fear, and the scenes of misery and mortality around you, loudly proclaim the displeasure of God: but the body, the seat of sickness and the prey of death, is merely the instrument of unrighteousness; the soul is the contriver and the agent in sin. The curse upon the serpent, by which the devil tempted our first parents, was only the outward token of God's vengeance upon Satan himself: nor is the pain and death of the body more than a visible token of the invisible effects of "God's wrath "against every soul of man that doeth evil." "It is "appointed for men once to die, and *after death* the "judgment." It is the wrath *to come*, which we are warned to flee from, and from which Jesus delivers us:* we are exhorted "not to fear them who kill the "body, and after that have no more that they can do;

* Read Rom. vi. 1 Thess. i.

" but to fear him, who is able to destroy both body " and soul in hell." Oh then, under the pains which you feel, consider, that if " these light afflictions, and " but for a moment," are so burdensome and tedious, how could you endure everlasting punishment, where " the fire is not quenched, and the worm dieth not?"

3. This will induce you to consider, whether you are prepared to meet God in judgment, should this sickness end in death. Life, at the best, is short and uncertain; and notwithstanding the favourable judgment of the most skilful physicians, and the use of the most excellent medicines, you may possibly be taken away: nor will you be the less likely to recover for making the enquiry, ' Am I ready for death and judgment? Am I entitled to, and fit for the kingdom of heaven?' Oh, do not put the issue of that awful decision, on which the happiness or misery of eternity depends, upon a comparative freedom from gross wickedness. You may, or you may not, have been moral and decent in your outward conduct: but surely you have not feared, loved, served, and worshipped God in all his ordinances and commandments, so much, and so well as you ought to have done; as his precepts, and your relations and obligations to him require: you have frequently no doubt indulged evil thoughts, harboured sinful desires and covetings, spoken idle and evil words, committed many secret sins, loved worldly objects inordinately, pursued them immoderately; and either neglected religious duties, or performed them in a very careless and heartless manner. You have either been much better than the best of mere men mentioned in scripture; or else you have

been very inattentive to divine law and your own thoughts, words, and works, if you be not sensible that this is true respecting you; for they all confessed that they were thus guilty.* And all this being *sin*, must either be pardoned or punished; it is transgression of the law; and it is written, "Cursed is every "one, who continueth not in all things written in the "book of the law to do them."

And do not imagine that some transient sorrow, partial amendment, external performances, or imperfect obedience in future, can so make amends for former crimes, or so merit God's favour, as to deliver you from future punishment, and entitle you to eternal life. This notion, however common, is totally unreasonable: no man expects to escape the punishment of robbery or murder, as the reward of not committing more robberies or murders; or pretends to pay old debts by going with ready money for what he *now* buys. Nay indeed if righteousness come by the law, and by any of our imperfect obedience to it for a part of our lives, then verily "Christ "died in vain." And if *your* sufferings in this world could atone for your sins, *his* sufferings would have been needless, and the denunciation of the wrath to come, mere words without a meaning.†

No, my brethren, these indeed are mere human devices, which will be found as ineffectual at the day of judgment, as every other expedient for safety proved in Noah's deluge, to those who refused to enter the Ark.

* Read Job xl. 3—5. xlii. 1—6. Psalms xxxii, xxxviii, xl. Nehemiah ix. Isaiah vi. Daniel ix.

† Read Rom. iii. and iv. Gal. ii. and iii.

God hath himself contrived, effected, and revealed in his holy word, salvation for sinners; springing from his compassionate love, and accomplished in a way, which is suited to impress the mind with a deep sense of the evil of sin, the desert, misery, and danger of sinners, the excellency of his law, the holiness of his nature, and the awful justice of his government; as well as to show the riches of his mercy, and to prove the insufficiency of all other methods of salvation: at the same time, the greatest encouragement is given to the humble penitent, and the most effectual motives furnished to all holy cheerful obedience for the future. —" Other Foundation can no man lay but Christ " Jesus," the eternal Son of God in our nature, our Surety, High-priest, Sacrifice, and Intercessor: in his person, " God manifest in the flesh," all salvation is treasured up, purchased by his meritorious life and agonizing death, given through his intercession, and by the supply of his Spirit to sanctify our souls. The sinner who is convinced of his danger, humbly conscious of his guilt, sensible of the worth of his immortal soul, and drawn off from all other hopes, in the exercise of genuine repentance, and believing the testimony of God's word, that Jesus is able and willing to save to the uttermost: encouraged by his invitations and promises, with earnest desires, trembling expectations, and fervent prayers, comes, applies, and waits on him for this salvation; waits also his time, and never waits in vain.* He is now willing to renounce his sins, deny himself, and undervalue

* Read Matt. xi. 28—30. xxii. 2 Cor. v. and vi.

other interests and pleasures, when they come in competition with the salvation of his soul, and the excellency of Christ.* In this way he "passes from death "unto life," obtains pardon of sin, peace of conscience, the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, becomes "a new creature," "walks in newness of life;" "ceases to do evil, learns to do well;" and by the grace of God (which he earnestly seeks in daily prayer) is taught, inclined, and enabled "to deny un- "godliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, "righteously, and godly in this present world."

This man is indeed a christian, has "a hope" of glory "which maketh not ashamed," and is therefore fit for death and judgment; because he is entitled to, and meet for, the inheritance of the saints in light. But, deceive not yourselves—this man *alone* is fit to die; for without repentance of sin, faith in Christ, love to him, and holiness of heart and life through the sanctification of the Spirit, no man can find acceptance with God, or admission into heaven. Consider therefore in this time of adversity, whether you have built on this Rock, fled to this Refuge, come to God in this Way, and experienced this change of disposition and behaviour. If this be indeed your happy case, your *consideration* will issue in inward peace and joy, and gratitude to God even for his fatherly correction;† and submission to his will whether for life or death: and you will endeavour to convince your fellow sufferers, that religion is the source of the most effectual consolations, the cure of impatience, and the remedy against the fear of death.

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* Read Phil. iii. † Read Heb. xii.

If this matter be yet doubtful, you will see the necessity of improving your confinement and retirement, the continuance of your life, and the use of your reason, (of which you may so soon be deprived,) in searching the scriptures, and serious self-examination, and with humble particular confession of the sins of your past life. You will use fervent constant prayers to God to teach you his truth, and salvation, to 'grant 'you true repentance and his holy Spirit.' You will beg for Christ's sake that he will forgive your sins, give you the comfort of his pardoning love, and by renewing you to holiness, prepare you for a holy heaven whenever you leave this world. In short, you will see cause, without delay, "to seek the Lord whilst "he may be found,"* in all the means of grace, as far as your disorders will admit of it. For, if, flattering yourself with hopes of recovery, and future years, you should postpone this one thing needful, and your sickness should end in death, (which, considering that you live and move and have your being in that God with whom you thus trifle, may probably be the case,) the event and disappointment will be indeed tremendous.† But whether life or death be before you, the counsel here given must be good; and the calm, arising from such serious attention to the concerns of eternity, would best concur with the medicines in restoring your health.

4. You should next *consider* what is the best method of bearing your affliction. It must be born, and cannot be avoided: but the question recurs, How may

* Read Isaiah lv. † Read Heb. iii.

the burden be best supported, and rendered lightest? Surely impatience, fretfulness, and peevishness not only provoke the indignation of God, but increase the weight of your sufferings, and render all around you weary of assisting you. On the other hand humble submission, patience, and quietness of spirit break the force, and lessen the weight of afflictions; and render every person cheerful, and ready to afford you the help which you are capable of receiving, And "why "should a *living man* complain, a man for the punish- "ment of his sins?"* Is it not "better to be chastened "of the Lord, than to be condemned with the world?" We are punished much less than our iniquities deserve: and 'tis our own fault and folly, if all our sufferings do not prove blessings to us; as they are the appointment of infinite wisdom and love, and have a direct tendency to our good, if our obstinacy and depravity do not render them ineffectual.

5. This introduces another subject of consideration; namely, how you may extract benefit from your afflictions, should it please God to restore your health? "Have ye suffered so many things in vain?" He who derives no benefit from afflictions must be a great loser; for he adds ingratitude to his former provocations; and, if not given up to final impenitency, still sharper corrections will be requisite to bring him to himself,† seeing milder measures have been ineffectual. The sinner, who is not humbled, and brought to repentance and newness of life, by affliction, has evidently

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* Read Lam. iii. 22—41. Heb. xii. 1—11. † Read Luke xv.

suffered in vain, and has cause to suspect that his recovery will not prove a blessing to him. But he, who like Manasseh,* under his affliction, seeks the Lord, and humbles himself greatly before him, with penitent confessions and fervent supplications; who with true repentance, and faith in Christ, seeks and obtains the pardoning mercy of God, and the grace of his holy Spirit, by which he may be enabled henceforth to lead a new life; will have cause to be thankful, both for sickness and for recovery, and may say, "Before "I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept "thy word;" "It is good for me that I have been "afflicted."

6. You should consider the *goodness of God* to you, in the care taken of you by this Charity. You ought to be thankful to those, who are the instruments of God in your relief, and pray that every blessing may attend them: but the Lord himself creates the medicines, and gives skill to the physicians, and ability and inclination to your generous benefactors. Through his goodness you have all that can alleviate your distress, or tend to remove your disorder, without any trouble or expence to yourselves; this is great cause for gratitude: and on him you must still depend for your cure, and give him thanks for it.

7. Having through your sickness and confinement, (as far as you are not totally disabled by *your* disorder,) much leisure from worldly business and company; and therefore much opportunity for getting ac-

* See 2 Chron. xxxiii

quaintance with the scriptures, and your own state and character; and being favoured with the means of grace in the scriptures read among you, the exhortations given you, the prayers offered up for you and with you, and the administration of sacred ordinances by your chaplain: you should consider seriously how you may obtain real advantage from these things; which you cannot do, unless you diligently apply your mind to them, and use them heartily, as in the presence of God, and with a desire and expectation of his gracious assistance and blessing.

Especially, should you be disposed to approach the Lord's table; remember that the bread and wine are only 'the outward and visible sign of an inward 'and spiritual grace:'* that not the outward sign, but this inward and spiritual grace, (even the body of Christ which was broken, and his blood which was shed, upon the cross, as the atonement of our sins, and 'which are verily and indeed received,' by the true believer, in the Lord's supper,) bring salvation to the soul: and that you must 'feed upon *him in your* '*hearts*, by faith with thanksgiving.'† Receiving the sacrament implies a humble confession of guilt, in that we come to the table 'not trusting in our own righ-'teousness, but in God's manifold and great mer-'cies;' an entire reliance on the atoning sacrifice of the death of Christ, through faith in his blood, for forgiveness of sins and acceptance with God, as the only way in which he is merciful to sinners; a cordial receiving of him as our Lord and Saviour; an avow-

* See the Church Catechism.

† Read very carefully the whole Communion Service.

ed confession of our faith in him, and obligations to him; a thankful remembrance of his sufferings as the ransom of our souls, and the purchase of our salvation; and a solemn dedication of ourselves, as bought with his blood, to serve him in body and soul, and live to his glory in all righteousness and true holiness all the days of our future life.

You must therefore consider that you come to the Lord's table, not to *merit* of God, but to receive the pledge of *unmerited* blessings: not *to atone for your own sins;* but to receive the benefit of the atonement, which the Son of God made in our nature on the cross; to express your unworthiness of, and thankfulness for, this inestimable gift; and to seek grace from him, that you may lead the rest of your life as one who is partaker of this great salvation.

If therefore you are living in known sin, or neglect of known duty; if you are proudly trusting in your own goodness; establishing your own righteousness, and not thankfully relying on the atonement of Christ; if you are not desirous of living a new life: in short, if you do not come in deep humiliation, and repentance of sin, express dependence on Christ, with many previous prayers, and serious purposes through his grace of living a life of faith and holiness; and if you come not forgiving all others from your heart, as you hope for forgiveness from God; your service will be mere formality, and you will receive unworthily. But coming in the exercise of repentance, faith, love, and gratitude, seeking forgiveness for yourselves, forgiving others, and earnestly desiring and praying to lead a new life, you will be an acceptable communi-

cant; and may humbly expect, that your soul shall be 'strengthened and refreshed by the body and blood of 'Christ, as your body is by the bread and wine.'*

8. You should consider how you can render yourselves useful to others in the hospital. How you can promote peace and regularity in your ward, repress immorality or improper conduct; alleviate the sufferings of any of the patients; be assistant to the nurses; speak any thing for the warning, instruction, or encouragement of others; read the scriptures or good books to such as are willing to hear but incapable of reading; pray for them or with them; or do any thing, which can in any respect be beneficial. This is evidently your bounden duty; and the least return you can make for the kindness shewn to you.

9. Should you perceive that your dissolution approaches, consider how you may most properly meet that solemn event. Settle all your other concerns as speedily as possible, that nothing may distract your mind in the hour of death; and remember that sacraments and other religious duties are but *means of grace;* but that, renewed repentance of sin, and cordial acceptance of Christ, and committing your soul into his almighty hand, to be washed by his blood, and sanctified by his grace, and received into his presence, is the only effectual preparation. To this, if your strength and senses permit, add serious warnings and exhortations to all around you, to be ready also, for they know not when their time shall come.

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* Read John vi. 27—58.

10. Finally if you find your health restored, and your release from confinement approaching; consider that you are returning to the converse and business of a world full of snares and temptations; and with serious apprehensions of the consequences, by earnest prayers commit yourself to the keeping of divine grace, that the world, the flesh, and the devil may not prevail against you: leave the hospital or your sick room "with fear and trembling," lest you should break the vows of God which are upon you, and return again to sinful practices. Not only return thanks to your kind benefactors, or formally in some place of worship; but let it be your first business in secrecy and seriousness, and also in your family if you have one, to render thanks to God for his mercies, to beg his grace to enable you to make suitable returns, and to supplicate his blessing upon the instruments of his goodness. Like Hezekiah after his sickness, and the man whom Christ healed and afterwards found in the temple,* let the house of God be the first place you go to. Make a daily practice of reading the scriptures seriously and attentively; begin and end each day with fervent prayer; avoid ungodly company, as you would persons infected with the plague; dread, and pray against temptations to sin; be sure to hallow them the whole Lord's day, and attend on every means of grace: that you may "sin no more, lest a worse thing come "unto you." And may the Lord make these few plain pages the means of your everlasting salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

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* Read John v.

DETACHED PAPERS.

DETACHED PAPERS.

Answer to C. F's Query respecting Eccles. ix. 13—15.

See Theol. Misc. for Oct. 1786.

IN explaining the word of God, we should remember that there is in every portion one precise meaning, previously to our employing our ingenuity upon it, which it is our business, with reverent attention to investigate. To discover that meaning, we should soberly and carefully examine the context, and consider the portion in question in the relation in which it stands.

Now whatever difficulties may occur in the book of Ecclesiastes, the grand scope of it is evident; namely, from experiment and observation to form a practical proof of the vanity of all worldly possessions, enjoyments, attainments, and distinctions; from which this conclusion is drawn: that "To fear God and to "keep his commandments is the whole of man:" his whole business, interest, honour; and felicity, as well as duty; all else being "vanity and vexation of spirit."

Among other instances, the inspired writer adduces, as a case in point, this anecdote, (if I may so call it)

of the poor wise man; who, though eminently useful in delivering the city by his wisdom, yet was ungratefully neglected and forgotten by his fellow-citizens; and had consequently rather mortification than benefit from his superior endowments, and the good use to which he put them; except what arose from the satisfactions of benevolence, the testimony of his conscience, and the expectation of a gracious recompence from God.

What city this was, or who the great king that besieged it, or who the wise man that delivered it were, may imploy man's curiosity, but can never be known by us, and is nothing at all to our purpose. But it is much to our purpose to learn from this scripture,

1. That even wisdom, (i. e. superior abilities improved by learning, and matured by experience and observation,) though far the most valuable of natural distinctions, yet abstracted from religion, and considered merely with reference to our situation in life, can do just nothing towards rendering us happy; but is equally vain and vexatious with those other distinctions that nature values and grace despises. When accompanied with external wealth, authority, and eminence, it exposes a man to the more malignant opposition, and envy, (and "who can stand before envy?) When found in a poor obscure person, others reap the benefit; but it does not rescue the possessor from hardship and penury, whilst it embitters them with more exquisite sensibility, irritated by disappointment, and the ingratitude which he experiences. Thus "all is "vanity;" and we are taught to despair of happiness

from ourselves and the world, and to seek it from God alone.

2. We may hence learn to do good from higher motives, than the expectations of gratitude, respect, praise, or kindness from man: viz. out of love to God, gratitude to the Author of all our mercies, disinterested benevolence, and an expectation of the gracious recompence to be confered at the resurrection of the just. Thus we shall "not be weary of well-doing," which otherwise we shall be, first or last, through the perverseness and ingratitude of mankind.

3. We are taught to watch and pray against such a perverted judgment, as is here stigmatized. It is very common to judge of the action by the person, not the person by the action; and to neglect, nay despise and condemn, the very same things in one, which we affect to admire in another. External prosperity, greatness, or reputation, give a splendour to trivial actions; and it becomes fashionable, and even creditable, to applaud; in so doing men consult their own reputation, and endeavour to obtain admiration by being admirers of an admired character. But poverty and obscurity cloud and degrade even what is really excellent; and he who can confer no *eclat*, must expect few to notice him. But this is a very unreasonable prejudice, looks very ill in the example before us, is condemned by St. James,* and should be avoided by the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus.

4. We are taught to prefer solid usefulness, to empty praise. The poor wise man's services, though for-

* James ii. 3—5.

gotten by man, are recorded with honour in holy writ. We are all greatly beset with the temptation of preferring the approbation of men to real usefulness; but we should remember that however now neglected, the latter will be "found to praise, and honour, and glo- "ry;" when the former shall end in shame and everlasting contempt.

Lastly, We are taught to beware of forgetting our benefactors, especially such inferiors as have been serviceable to us: who are liable to be neglected in proportion as they need our grateful assistance. Had a rich and prosperous person been thus forgotten, it had been of less consequence, but the case of the poor man was very hard. Perhaps we have some poor benefactor concerning whom we may ask, as Ahasuerus of Mordecai, what hath been done to him for this service? and perhaps conscience may answer, Nothing. This hint may have its use.

These lessons we may learn from the plain meaning of this scripture; and though they do not decide any question about justification, efficacious grace, or the believer's privileges, (which are abundantly declared in other scriptures;) yet they are of important use in forming the christian's judgment, and directing his conduct. And I would gladly know by what authority any man, overlooking these plain useful instructions, by the help of a warm imagination, sets himself to find gospel mysteries in this passage? We should not *a priori* have looked for a delineation of doctrinal truth in such a subject as Solomon is treating of. We can scarcely by fair interpretation, find one explicit word of the *distinguishing* doctrines of grace in the

whole book; and it would puzzle the most ingenious of these fanciful expositors fairly to accommodate the circumstances of this story to the work of redemption. Two purposes indeed, such as they are, may be answered by such interpretation.

1. Loose professors are encouraged in their vain confidence, by hearing that none of the redeemed are more mindful of, or thankful to their Saviour than themselves, "No man remembered that same poor "man:" In diametrical opposition to the whole current of scripture, which declares, that "the love of "Christ *constrains them* to live to him." And,

2. It is a powerful engine in the hands of vain-glorious men, by which to catch the attention, and excite the admiration of injudicious multitudes; who ignorantly admire the sagacity of the man that finds deep mysteries, where their more sober pastors perceived nothing but *unrelishing*, practical instruction. Thus they draw them off from the pure unadulterated milk of the word, by which they might grow in grace; to feed them with that "knowledge which puff-"eth up, instead of love, which edifieth:" and of what use is this to St. James's pure and undefiled religion, I leave others to determine. What mischiefs have arisen from this source are too evident. Divisions, contentions, mutual contempt and reproach, dreadful scandals, and every thing destructive of vital godliness, and tending to disgrace the very doctrines contended for.

I have heard many sensible and pious persons lament this sort of explication of scripture, as an evil of the first magnitude: and I am more and more

convinced it is so. At this rate you may prove any doctrine from any text; and you can form no position so absurd or pernicious, but a scriptural proof may plausibly be adduced. Thus the flood-gate is opened for all heresies and enthusiasm: Every thing is reduced to uncertainty, as if the scripture had no determinate meaning, till one was arbitrarily imposed by the imagination of man; a faculty that is indeed vague and reducable to no rules. Thus different men impose opposite interpretations; and all appears an incoherent confusion of jarring fancies, whilst the bewildered enquirer, despairing of satisfaction, gives over the vain attempt, and sits down, perhaps in scepticism and infidelity. The most important doctrines of the gospel seem to lose their beauty and glory, along with their simplicity, in the midst of such useless encumbrance: and the most conclusive arguments lose their effect, and become suspected by the company which they keep: whilst the sophistical proof is detected, the opposer is emboldened to treat the rest as equally capable of refutation.

Thus, at the same time that the extravagant perversion gains the admiration of our own party, our precious doctrines, and even the blessed Bible itself is exposed to the contempt of discerning persons, who are of different sentiments in religion. Many, with whom I have conversed, can join with me in saying that such arguments, and such expositors, have formed our chief prejudice against the very doctrines themselves; and though, by the grace of God, we have got over this hindrance, yet we remember how it once was with us, and regret the case of thousands, who

are yet stumbling, and like to stumble, at this stumbling-stone.

However men may admire the sagacity of these expositors, it certainly shews a very lamentable state of the organs of sight, when a man can see nothing obvious, useful, real, and capable of being pointed out to others for their benefit; but, when blind to these things, he sees every thing through a different medium than others, and in such a manner as can furnish only amusement instead of information. It is very improperly called *spiritually* explaining the scripture. The spiritual meaning, is the meaning of the Spirit of God, which is generally simple, and obvious to the humble enquirer. Opposite to this is the *fanciful* meaning, which always appears forced and unnatural to sober minds; diverse and opposite to men of opposite parties and lively imaginations; and only excites admiration by being surprising and unexpected.

We have abundance of plain scriptures from which every doctrine may be proved and elucidated. The types of the Old Testament, and the parables of the New corroborate the proof, and illustrate the explanation. Though even in these, sobriety and sound judgment should check the sallies of fancy; that the similitude may rather appear striking in the grand outlines, than strained for the sake of minute resemblance. But when the grand design of scripture is practical or cautionary; to slip over the obvious meaning, and impose another, is not interpreting but perverting scripture, not instructing but misleading the people. Could we find the whole gospel in the passage before us, we may ask, *Cui bono?* They, who believe these doc-

trines before hand, need not this evidence; and others will never be convinced by it.

Thus the parable of the good Samaritan is evidently intended to explain and enforce the great commandment of loving our neighbour as ourselves, by shewing in a lively example, how every personal and party consideration is to be overlooked; and safety, ease, interest, and indulgence hazarded or renounced, to rescue a fellow-creature, though an enemy or stranger, in the hour of distress. Christ indeed, having in his life and death perfectly fulfilled this law, and far exceeded all that can possibly be required of any other person, because of his peculiar character, circumstances, and suretyship engagements, hath inexpressibly out-done the good Samaritan. But even this is accommodation; and the practical inference, "Go "thou and do likewise," demands our peculiar attention. But now, if ingenuity and imagination are employed to bend every circumstance of this parable to the situation of fallen man, and the love of Christ, and this is given as the primary, or only meaning, whilst the practical instruction is kept back; the reader or hearer may be amused or disgusted, as he favours or dislikes the doctrines of grace; but whatever edification he may receive, he has not that, which our Lord principally intended by the parable.

As I am unacquainted both with the querist, and his sentiments upon the scripture proposed; I hope he will do me the justice to admit that I have no reference to him in this paper; but only took occasion, from the question, to communicate my sentiments upon a subject of considerable importance; and to

bear testimony against an evil, which appears of dangerous tendency. My idea of the interpretation of this text, was not conjecturally drawn from any thing in the query; but from what I have seen and heard advanced upon it: I can assure the reader, not only that I most firmly believe the doctrines known by most readers of "the Theological Miscellany," under the title of the doctrines of grace, but also that real regard to these doctrines inspires my zeal against such things as deform their beauty, or weaken their evidence.

Some Questions relative to the final Perseverance of the Saints:

THE doctrine of Final Perseverance has been so repeatedly and amply proved to be true and important from a vast number of express scripture testimonies; from the divine character and perfections; from the nature of the whole scheme of salvation, and from the security of the covenant of grace, that it would be superfluous to add any thing to the evidence that hath already been adduced.—

Yet there are many persons that appear to be, and doubtless are, true christians, who not only hesitate to embrace this truth, but have strong prejudices against it. This, I apprehend, frequently arises from the too common want of accuracy in our method of stating the doctrine; from the gross abuses of which it not only is supposed capable, but which are actually made of it, in buoying up the vain confidence, and ministering to the unhallowed joys of hypocritical professors; and from their not seeing how it can be guarded from such dishonourable perversions. To obviate therefore such objections against a part of divine truth, which is so useful for the peace and establishment of the humble christian, and rescue it from those abuses which expose it to the scorn of pharisees and infidels, should be the uniform endeavour of every one who believes and finds spiritual advantage from

it. I would therefore propose and attempt to answer a few plain questions relative thereto.

1. Who are the persons that shall finally persevere?

It is easy to answer in general, that all believers, children of God, or saints, shall finally persevere; but this leaves the matter where it was; to remove the difficulty we must enter more particularly into the subject.

No minister of the gospel by preaching this doctrine intends to convey the idea, that the whole company of persons who profess to believe this, or any other doctrine, or all the other doctrines of their system, shall finally be saved; or that the privilege of final perseverance is confined to those who make it an article of their creed. The belief of this doctrine may do the pious person important services; the rejection of it may be very prejudicial to him, without being either the cause of perseverance on the one hand, or of apostacy on the other. Those hearers of the word, in all congregations, who receive the seed by the way side, which, taken away by Satan, does not strike root: Those who received it in stony ground, an *unhumbled* heart, whose temporary faith, and ostentatious profession, sooner or later will come to nought: And those who receive it among thorns, who are so attached to and encumbered by *worldly* things, that they bear no fruit, having no grace can persevere in nothing but open sin or specious hypocrisy. The word of God gives us reason to suspect, that even of those professors who stand very high in the estimation of the most experienced and judicious servants of God, some will end no better than Ahithophel, Judas, or Demas;

whether they persevere in their unsound profession or apostatize from it. God alone can see the heart; and though he hath given us such rules of judgment, as suffice to direct us in our duty, yet he never meant to communicate his divine prerogative of *certainly* knowing others to be true christians. How then can we certainly know of any man that he will infallibly so persevere as to be saved? "Let God be true, though "every man be a liar." If any professor, however eminent, apostatize, and live and die an apostate (which by the way is not very easy for another man to be sure of;) let us not bring it as a matter of fact to overturn the truth of God, by saying, 'A child of 'God has fallen away finally;' nor let us rashly suppose an *impenitent* apostate has been saved; rather let us say, a very specious hypocrite has been unmasked.

But though we cannot *certainly* know concerning others whether they have real grace, because we have no consciousness of what passes in their hearts; yet, as conscious of what passes in our own, we may, in some cases at least, *certainly* know that we have true grace, and therefore shall finally persevere. Whilst grace is very small, and the discerning faculty very dim, and sin prevails very much, the minuteness of the object, the imperfection of the organ, and the surrounding obstacles, must make it difficult to decide absolutely; but when the judgment is matured, and grace increased, and corruptions more brought under, I apprehend we may determine in a more confident manner.

This premised, the matter comes to an issue. The true christian shall finally persevere. He who is sure of his christianity, may thence certainly infer his perseverance. Now true christians perceive a vast importance in eternal things, and judge temporal, comparatively, worthless.

True christians see great hatefulness in sin, and much sin in their past lives, present conduct, and in their hearts, which produces deep humiliation, sorrow for sin, and unfeigned repentance; and causes them to set themselves against all sin, especially that sin which is most customary to them; to watch against it, to pray against it, to dread it, and consider sin as the worst thing that can come to them.

True christians are influenced in their daily walk by a realizing belief, that things are, have been, and will be, as the word of God declares them.

True christians especially believe the whole testimony of God concerning Jesus Christ, and humbly conscious of their need of such a salvation, and its suitableness, freeness, and sufficiency, renounce all other hopes to flee to, lay hold of, apply for, and trust in Jesus Christ, and God's grace and mercy through him.

True christians count every personal endowment, attainment, or performance, and every worldly interest, connexion, and comfort, worthless in comparison of Christ; and are thus prepared to part with any or all of them, when they come in competition with him, and have actually given up many things for his sake.

True christians receive him unreservedly in all his offices, and live by faith in him, as their Prophet,

Priest, and King, for the pardon of all their sins, and the supply of all their wants.

True christians have the law of God written in their hearts, inwardly delight in it, though they cannot obey it as they would; they are then most in their element, and happiest when they are engaged in religious exercises and holy services. They allow of no known sin, and neglect no known duty; but "by the grace of "God, which bringeth salvation, are taught to deny "ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, "righteously, and godly in this present world."

Now as far as any man is inwardly conscious that this is his experience, these his desires, this his daily aim, his character, and conduct, he may be sure that he possesses what no hypocrite ever yet attained to; and he may be sure that the same distinguishing grace which hath wrought this decisive difference, will preserve and perfect its own good work. But whilst this matter remains doubtful, the other cannot be certain; for how can he be sure of perseverance who is not sure of conversion? Such should be exhorted to "give diligence, to make their calling and "election sure;" and be encouraged by the promise, that "they who seek shall find." But let them not prematurely grasp at what neither belongs to them, nor would yet be profitable to them. Nay if the established christian grows very slothful, or sinks into allowed sin; by thus weakening his evidence of conversion, he loses the *warranted* comfort of this doctrine; which, in this case, would operate as a most dangerous opiate, when stimulants alone are requisite. It is the wise appointment of God, that when love de-

clines fear should rouse the torpid soul; none should counteract this appointment. Is the backslider alarmed and distressed? It is well. Let him repent and do his first works, and in due time God will restore his former consolations; but let none encourage themselves in sloth and sin by this doctrine, lest, being deceived, they perish with a lie in their right hand.

The true believer then, in the habitual exercise of grace and practice of his duty, is the only person who can *warrantably* be confident of perseverance.—Having so fully resolved this first question, the others will more readily be dispatched.

2. What need has the person above described of this encouragement, seeing he may be supposed otherwise comforted?

The more a man values spiritual blessings, the greater will be his dread of losing them. The more conscientious, circumspect and watchful he is, the greater will be his acquaintance with the treachery of his own heart, the facinations of the world, and the artifice of Satan. The falls of others, whom he has preferred far before himself, will much alarm and distress him. He will not always, even when most diligent, walk in light and comfort; and he will be conscious of much sloth and evil, though he cause no scandal to the gospel, nor much bring the reality of his conversion into doubt. On all these accounts he will be anxious about the *future*, and distressed about the event of the important *welfare*, even to the discouraging his heart, and weakening his hand at some times. But this doctrine is sweetly suited to encourage him to commit the keeping of his soul for the remnant of his

days, into the hands of a faithful covenant God, that without distraction he may attend to his present duty. For the Lord takes pleasure in seeing his servants joyful in their work, though not in sin and sloth. But,

3. In what shall they persevere?

(1.) In that state of grace wherein they stand, so as not finally to perish or come short of glory, for their good Shepherd shall keep them, and "none shall "pluck them out of his hand," by temptation, or persecution, living or dying.—(2.) In an habitual course of holy obedience, progressively waxing stronger and stronger, and bringing forth fruit more and more even to the end. The former mainly respects their personal interests: the latter is intimately connected with the glory of God, and the credit of the gospel in the world, together with the interests of religion and the salvation of souls: the former is important; the latter vastly more so. Self-love alone may influence a man to desire to be saved from misery, and made eternally happy; but nothing short of divine grace, producing genuine love of God, attachment to the cause of godliness, and benevolence to the souls of men, can render us anxious about the latter. To suppose a man awakened and converted, and then returning into the world and sin, and after a long interval, perhaps of many years, just brought back again to escape hell; and to suppose this a general and common case, and to accommodate the doctrine to it, is to make a perseverance pleasing to hypocrites, dishonourable to God, scandalous to religion, subversive of holy practice, and unsuitable to true christians, who all long to persevere to the end *in increasing holiness*, and dread sin as the greatest evil,

and cannot bear the thoughts of dishonouring God, and being hurtful examples to others, even though they should not be sent to hell for it. A few anomalous cases we may allow of, but the general rule is, a perseverance in holiness, even to the end.

Finally; How shall this perseverance be effected?

The Lord himself will either by his continual grace uphold his people in the uniform holy walk which he requires, daily exercising " repentance towards God, " faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," and cheerful universal obedience: or if at any time they are left to step aside, he will withhold comfort from their souls, rebuke them by his word, chastise them with his rod, till he bring them to repentance, and lead them with weeping and supplication back into the forsaken paths of holy obedience Did it consist with the purpose and counsel of God to leave a true christian to depart from him, and return into the world and sin, and die impenitent, he not only might, but certainly would perish. Our security is, that God hath promised that he will put *his fear* into the hearts of all his true servants, that they shall not thus depart from him.

Thus stated and guarded, this doctrine may be of eminent use to the true christian, to quicken his diligence, arm him with courage, and invigorate his resolution to press forward; to be " stedfast and unmove- " able, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for- " asmuch as he knows that his labour is not in vain " in the Lord." And if hypocrites will abuse it, they do it at their peril.

ANSWER TO FERVIDUS.

Theol. Misc. 1786.

THE Questions which Fervidus proposes concerning the law of God, tend to ascertain the precise distinction betwixt the highest attainments of nature, with its utmost advantages; and the least measure of true grace under every disadvantage. The difficulty of giving an exact, perspicuous, and satisfactory solution is therefore equal to the importance of the subject. Not so much from the nature of the subject itself, as from the state of mind peculiar to him, for whom the solution seems chiefly wanted, namely, the feeble believer. For as has been observed in a former paper, the object to be discerned and distinguished is so minute; the descerning faculty so dim and unaccustomed to its office; and the counterfeits so plausible; that it is hardly possible to render the distinction so plain, and *marked*, as to give the desired satisfaction. Indeed it seems to be the Lord's purpose, that the reality of grace should ordinarily be ascertained only by increase; and, as he requires us to "press forward," and "to "give diligence to make our calling and election "sure;" so he seldom allows the comfortable privilege of assurance to be attained or enjoyed in any other way.

The *scriptural* discussion however of such subjects cannot fail of being useful in various ways; especially

by cautioning persons under serious impressions, against being imposed on by Satan with a counterfeit conversion, and a destructive confidence; and by forming the judgment, encouraging the diligence, and awakening the vigilance of true converts, in their first setting out; as well as by obviating prejudices, and removing stumbling-blocks. Should I therefore fail of giving full satisfaction to Fervidus, I hope some good may arise from the following observations, on a subject which has for many years exceedingly occupied my thoughts, and engaged my most serious attention.

There are three distinct questions proposed by Fervidus.

I. "May not an unregenerate man know a great "deal *speculatively* about the spirituality of the law of "God?" The word *speculatively* is carefully to be adverted to; for both in the scriptures, and in the writings of many eminent divines on this subject, many things are spoken of the incapacity of the *natural* man to know spiritual things; which ought indisputably to be interpreted of *spiritual* knowledge; but are often explained of *speculative* knowledge, to the unspeakable prejudice of the cause of God. This premised, I observe, that an unregenerate man is capable of knowing *speculatively* or *scientifically* any subject in divinity, in proportion to his capacity, opportunity, or application; as well as in other sciences. Let a man of great abilities be induced by prospect of reputation, or worldly advantages; or by a fatal mistake of the "form "of knowledge" for a saving religion, to turn his studies into that channel; and with every advantage afford-

ed, let him closely apply himself, and he will arrive at great eminence in theology as a science, as well upon the Calvinistical, or Orthodox scheme, as any other. Consequently he will be able to state more exactly, to distinguish more accurately, and to dispute more acutely about any given subject, where *speculation*, not *experience*, is concerned, than most of the real children of God; who are destitute of such abilities, and have not time, or opportunity for such information, or application.

According to St. Paul, if a man have the knowledge of all mysteries, and the gifts of prophecy and miracles, and have not love, he is nothing. And Christ declares that *many* of those, who have actually prophecied and cast out devils in his name, will be ordered to depart from him as workers of iniquity, whom he *never* knew. And, in fact, every age has produced persons, whose knowledge and gifts have not only rivalled, but eclipsed, those of the most illustrious servants of God; and even imposed upon them; and whose detected wickedness, and awful catastrophes, have shewn whose children they were. Thus Ahithophel imposed on David; Judas on the apostles; and Demas on St. Paul. And the false teachers at Corinth, and other places, so dazzled the minds of the primitive christians, that they even undermined the authority of the apostles themselves, and alienated the minds of the people from them, which they never could have done, without much *real*, as well as much pretended knowledge. Nay, it is undeniable, however mysterious, that, besides that knowledge attainable by ordinary means, the Spirit of God hath often communicated supernatural

knowledge, and other gifts to unregenerate men; and how far he may do so still, it is not for us to determine. But without taking this into the account, it will, I suppose, be allowed that Satan possesses as large a share of doctrinal knowledge as any believer upon earth, and could, if permitted and inclined, discourse as eloquently and accutely on religious subjects.

There is evidently mentioned in scripture a twofold knowledge: The one is spoken of in degrading language. "Knowledge puffeth up;" the latter in the highest terms: "This is eternal life to know thee, the "only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast "sent." The former is attainable, in any degree, by a natural man; the latter, in the least degree, is the effect of regeneration, and inseparably connected with eternal life. Suffice it now to say that the difference is not so much in the things known, as in the manner of knowing them, and the effects produced thereby.

An unregenerate man may understand speculatively the strictness and extent of the law of God, as requiring perfect love, and taking cognizance of the thoughts and intents of the heart. By arguments, which he cannot answer or evade, he may be constrained to allow the reasonableness and equity of the precept, and the justice of its awful sanction as this confession was extorted from Pharaoh, "The LORD is righ-"teous, and I and my people are wicked." Whether this be properly what is meant by the word *spirituality*, I will not positively decide: But this is enough for my present purpose; and leads me to another question.

II. 'May not an unregenerate man be led to strive

'against sins of the heart, in consequence of this know-
'ledge?'

When a man seriously apprehends that he must either part with his sins, or endure everlasting misery for them; as long as this conviction continues, the fear of such a punishment, joined to some hope of escaping it, and obtaining eternal happiness, must influence him both to abstain from the sin he loves, and practice the duty he hates. And if he understand that delighting his fancy with speculative indulgence may provoke God to cast him into hell, he will for a time put a force upon himself, and strive to repress sinful desires, and to abstain from even ideal pleasure. If he also has a *notional acquaintance* with those dispositions, and affections, which the law of God forbids or requires; he will, under the present impression, disallow the one, and endeavour to excite the other. But this state of mind is too unnatural to be durable. The whole current of his inclinations vehemently sets one way; the whole vigour of his exertions is pressing the other way: And Horace said truly and doubtless experimentally, *Naturam expellas furcâ, tamen usque recurret.* 'Though you would thrust nature out of doors with 'a fork, she will nevertheless recoil upon you.' Unless a *new nature* be communicated a man must at length grow weary of such a forced, painful and unsuccessful exertion; and will seek and find relief from some or other of the numerous *Recipes*, which every where offer themselves, for the quieting of awakened consciences. Thus, some relapse into their former careless course, and rush into still greater excess of riot; stunning reflection by dissipation and indulgence.

Others find relief from their fears in the hurry of business, the prospects of wealth, or the pursuits of ambition. Numbers in false religion, "a form of godliness," or a "form of knowledge," and find the very ordinances, or truths of God, when abused by man's depravity, an anodyne for a disquieted conscience. Hence the superstitious, pharisaical, antinomian, and enthusiastical corruptions of the gospel, which in all ages have prevailed. Men under awakenings, but never "new created in Christ Jesus unto good works," having found in these abuses, ease from the torment of an accusing conscience, recommend the remedy to others, with a *probatum est;* and having mistaken this relief, "for the peace of God, which passeth all under-"standing;" they would persuade others, that this is the only true evangelical comfort; because they know no other. Thus the enemy sows his tares; and "evil "men, and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving "and being deceived." Here a wide field opens before us, but we may not expatiate in it: it suffices for our present purpose to observe, that the numerous generation of those, "who are pure in their own eyes, and "yet are not washed from their filthiness," consists mainly of such persons, who after some superficial alarms of conscience, have sought, and found, and rested in a false peace; either in external religion without making Christ their whole confidence; or in professed faith in Christ alone without "Sanctification by "the Spirit unto obedience:" either neglecting or abusing the blessed gospel.

III. Proceed we then finally to enquire; wherein the precise difference lies, between the views such

persons have of the law of God with their effects; and those of the most ignorant regenerate person.

This difference both in their views, and the effects of those views, arises wholly from that new nature before mentioned, and consists, in great measure, in the manner wherein the things are known.

The unregenerate man has nothing but those fears of future punishment, and hopes of future reward, which are both ignorant and unstable, (resulting only from notion, not a realizing faith) to oppose to all his vehement inclinations, and vigorous hopes and fears of a worldly nature. Like a slave therefore, when the bribe and the whip are out of sight, he renounces the master, and leaves the employment that he hates; and spends his time more agreeably to his inclinations. When therefore he succeeds in laying his conscience asleep, his diligence is done with; and there wants only a suitable occasion, and temptation, to induce him "to "return like a dog to his vomit, and like a sow that "is washed to her wallowing in the mire."

The regenerate man is influenced by hopes and fears, both such as are common to him, with others under serious impressions; only more stable and operative: and such as are of a nobler and more sanctifying nature. For certainly if any seem to refine religion to such a degree of disinterestedness, as to discard all personal regard to happiness; they strain the bow till it breaks; neither the nature of a rational creature, nor the nature of religion, nor the nature of happiness can bear such refinement. To seek all our happiness from the favour and love of God; and to give up all personal regards of a *temporal* nature, when the will

and glory of God, and the benefit of man require it; is all that the law commands; all that ever prophet, or apostle attained unto; nay, with reverence be it spoken, all that Christ Jesus exemplified. But besides these hopes and fears, in all their variety or energy; the regenerate man has a capacity of another sort, totally different in kind, from all that any other man ever possessed. He is made partaker of the divine nature; and being created in knowledge, "righteousness, and true holiness after the image of God," he sees, judges, chooses, desires, delights, according to God. 'By this new nature he is enabled to discern, and be *delighted* with the holy excellency and '*beauty*, which is in divine things;' "finding them "sweeter than honey and the honey-comb, he desires "them more than wine," "remembers them more "than wine;" and so relishes them, that proportionably he loses his relish for other things. They are as delightful harmony to his ears, and fragrant "as ointment poured forth;" and the pleasure they excite in the soul is represented by those several kinds of pleasing sensations of which the body is capable. All these things imply a love of, desire after, and delight in divine things, for the sake of that excellency now perceived in them, and that relish experienced of them; which does not supersede, but comes in aid of those other principles, and renders them habitually, and permanently superior to, and victorious over all remaining opposite inclinations; and over the pressure of all worldly hopes and fears, even in the time of the most vehement temptations. I do not mean independently so; for both natural and spiritual life depend upon, and are invigorated by him who first gave them.

The person of the Saviour, and the brightness of the Father's glory, seen in his face, is the *primary* object of love, admiration, desire, and delight, to this spiritual capacity, imparted in regeneration; but it is not the *only* object. There is a glory and beauty, and excellency suited to it in all divine things; and particularly in the divine law. Now then we may, I think, ascertain the precise difference. A speculative knowledge, a cold, and forced approbation, and an unwilling, constrained obedience, are all the unregenerate man can attain to; and he inwardly disrelishes the whole, and would wish, if he durst, the precept less strict. But the regenerate person, even in the lowest class, cordially approves the law of God, as far as known, has some real love to it, and longs after conformity to it, as a most desirable, excellent, and blessed thing. The one, I say, inwardly would have the law changed in compliance to his inclinations; and the other his inclinations changed into conformity to the law. The difference between the newborn babe, and the mature christian; and the variations to which the best are liable, must be allowed for; but according to the measure of grace in exercise, the regenerate soul will see beauty, taste sweetness, and hear divine harmony in every precept: and the native language of his heart will be, "Oh, how I love "thy law!" "Oh, that my ways were directed to "keep thy statutes!" "I delight in the law of God "after the inward man."

The effects of these views will be such as follow. A heart-felt sorrow upon remembrance of former violations of duty, even though they be supposed to

be forgiven: shame and self-loathing on considering the opposition which hath subsisted, and doth still subsist in so great degree, betwixt this perfect rule, and his conduct, character, and disposition; hence proceeds a *broken and contrite heart;* which of all things the hypocrite fails most in counterfeiting; though nothing be more essential to, and distinguishing of, a true believer: a cordial approbation of the honour done the divine law in the obedience and death of the incarnate Son of God; with a sincere application to him, and an *undivided* dependence upon him, as "the end of the law for righteousness unto "every one that believeth:" This will, in this case, be at the same time accompanied with a tenderness of conscience, renewed grief and shame upon every renewed transgression, and a dissatisfaction with every present attainment in holiness; because so far beneath that admired and beloved standard. In this person's mind the ideas of perfect holiness and perfect felicity will be habitually associated: sin will be groaned under as the greatest burden, and dreaded and prayed against as the greatest evil; chastening will be welcomed (upon reflection) when they restrain from sin, or conduce to holiness; and however the man values and longs for comfort, yet he especially hungers and thirsts after righteousness. The law is not only treasured in his head, but "written in his heart;" and the correspondent dispositions there created, will produce repentance, faith, and holiness, of a nature totally distinct from, and in their smallest degree vastly superior to, the most splendid attainments of hypocrites.

N. B. I would recommend the character and conversation of Talkative, and Faithful's discourse with him, in "The Pilgrim's Progress," to the reader's careful perusal, as full to the purpose.

Remarks on the Parable of the unjust Steward.

THE several replies made to *Indagator's* question on our Lord's inference from the parable of the unjust steward, though very pertinent and useful, seem not to have exhausted the subject, or to have precluded the propriety of making some further observations upon it.

"The Lord commended the unjust steward, be-"cause he had done wisely." The injustice of his expedient was glaring, but the policy of it was admirable; and his conduct in this particular was proposed by Christ, to his professed disciples, as worthy of their imitation: and indeed the conduct of worldly men, "in their generation," may commonly suggest useful instruction and reproof to the children of light in their most important pursuits. The steward, perceiving that his trust was expiring, and distress about to seize on him, formed a plan, at his lord's expence, to secure to himself a maintenance, when deprived of other resources. We are all stewards; all we have and are, as rational creatures and subjects of God, is entrusted to us, and an account will shortly be required of the

use to which we have applied it. We have all wasted our Lord's goods, and death will speedily deprive us of our stewardship; and if we die under the condemnation which we have merited, the doom of the rich man, mentioned in the subsequent part of the chapter, will be ours. But we live under a dispensation of mercy through our divine Mediator; in whom, when we believe, we "are freely justified by faith," "made "the righteousness of God in him," and "heirs ac- "cording to the hope of eternal life." This justifying faith, however, is an active principle, and influences proportionably our whole conduct. When we first believe the testimony of God concerning the wrath to come, and the refuge provided for us; faith principally works by fear, desire, and hope. When our views become more distinct, and we possess an habitual confidence that "Jesus hath delivered from the wrath "to come, by bearing our sins in his own body on "the tree;" faith principally "works by love;" by admiration of the excellencies of Christ; longings, after near and intimate fellowship with him; gratitude for inexpressible obligations received from him; zeal for his glory; love of his cause and people; and a cordial desire that all around us, and all men every where, if it might be, should know, love, honour, and be blessed in him and his salvation. The same principle of living faith overcomes the world and purifies the heart; and when ambition, avarice; sensuality, malignant and selfish affections: are crucified, and the fears of reproach, contempt, and persecution are overcome, through our "glorying in the cross of Christ, by whom the world "is crucified to us, and we to the world;" then we

are proportionably brought under the constraining influence of love to Him "who died for us and rose "again," and induced to imitate him, who, "though "he were rich, for our sakes became poor, that we, "through his poverty, might be made rich!" And under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, whose in-dwelling is the seal of our justification by faith, we exercise the wisdom of using things temporal in subserviency to our eternal good, by improving them as talents to the glory of the Lord, the comfort of his people, and the good of mankind. Thus our present use of the things entrusted to us, will conduce to our advantage, when death shall terminate our stewardship; for then especially the word will be fulfilled, "to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have "abundantly; but from him that hath not shall be "taken away, even that which he seemeth to have." This indeed will in no sense be the reward of any *merit* in our obedience: Yet it will not only evidence our faith to be *living*, but it will ascertain the proportion of our future felicity; for the Lord loves and recompences the fruits of his own Spirit; every vessel of mercy will certainly be full, but all will not be found equally capacious; the exercise of holy affections conduces greatly to the increase of them; and liberal love, above all other things, expands and enlarges the heart.

With these observations before us, let us examine the scripture in question—"The mammon of un-"righteousness" denotes those riches in the getting, hoarding; and spending of which so much iniquity is committed, that ungodly men seem to worship a cruel

idol, while piety, truth, integrity, and mercy, their own bodies and souls, yea their children and relatives, as well as their neighbours, are laid as bleeding sacrifices on the altar of *Mammon*. Yet in the use of these very riches (which as the creatures of God are good in themselves) professed christians are exhorted "to "make themselves friends;" in allusion to the steward's having made himself friends by disposing of his master's property: for that portion of a man's wealth, which from love to Christ is expended on works of piety and charity, not only supplies the wants of the saints, and excites them to praise God, but it also reminds them to pray for their benefactors in cordial love, which is one of the most desirable proofs of true friendship;* and as many persons of this description, after having received the most important good, through the liberality of their brethren, may go before them to glory; so we may conceive of them as standing ready to welcome their benefactors into everlasting mansions, when flesh and heart, and all earthly resources fail them.

Let us fix our thoughts on some one of those distinguished few, whose liberal love to man for Christ's sake, persevered in for a long course of years, among other acts of beneficence, sent the word of life to tens of thousands whom they never saw, and were thus instrumental to the salvation of numbers. May we not imagine that we see the spirits of those righteous persons, to whom the liberality of such a believer was life from the dead, waiting the moment of their bene-

*2 Cor. ix. 10—15.

factor's dissolution, and his last expiring groans, to welcome him into everlasting habitations, with shouts of triumphant joy, and fervent thanksgiving, whilst they see him receive a full reward of "his work of "faith and labour of love, and patience of hope in the "Lord Jesus?" Nor can a more ecstatick rapturous feeling be conceived, than that which must thrill through every soul on such an occasion; except we think of the believer's beholding, face to face, that transcendantly greater Benefactor, who hath loved him and washed him from his sins in his own blood.

But turn the glass, and behold a professor of the gospel, who, possessing wealth, hath spent it in ostentation and luxury, or hoarded it in covetousness, saying to the poor disciples of Christ, "Depart in "peace, be ye warmed or clothed." Conceive of this man, when turned out of his stewardship—what an awful reverse! The abuse of his talents proves that his faith was dead, his hope presumption, and his profession hypocrisy. Christ's deserted cause, his neglected disciples, and his violated commandments, concur to prove that he loved the mammon of unrighteousness more than the Saviour of the world; that he resembled Judas or Ananias, more than any other of the primitive professors of the gospel; and that he copied the injustice, but not the wisdom, of the steward in the parable.

But few of Christ's disciples are rich: therefore he adds, "He that is faithful in that which is least, is "faithful also in much." Faithfulness in a christian, who considers himself as a steward, implies a practical conviction that he is bound by every tie, but most

by that of love and gratitude, to employ his talent according to the will of his Lord, as far as he knows it. In proportion as a man acts from this principle, and by this rule, he meets with a gracious recompence for the meanest services: The widow's two mites, expressing her fervent love, are as acceptable as the most costly oblations bestowed from an equal measure of the same love, and far beyond such as spring from another source. And as all we possess is the Lord's, we rob him when we employ it contrary to his will; and this injustice, in the use of a little, shows the same bad state of the heart, as when great affluence is thus abused. Nothing we have of this world is properly our own, or given us exclusively for our own sake; nothing of this kind can make us truly rich or happy; but grace is our own, and terminating in glory, constitutes the true riches, unalienable and sufficient for our everlasting felicity. Now on what grounds can we suppose that we partake of the grace of God, or shall at length be admitted into the mansions of the blessed; if we do not find our hearts disposed to improve our talents to the glory of God and the benefit of mankind, from faith in Christ and love to his name, cause, and people.—In short, we may either serve God or Mammon, but we cannot serve both. Every justified believer aims to serve God in the use of his worldly substance, be it more or less; every servant of Mammon aims at some worldly advantage, even by his profession of the gospel, and his religious duties. Thus the character of believers and unbelievers may be distinguished, and according to this distinction will be the recompence of every individual.

Remarks on Hopkins's Enquiry into the Nature of True Holiness.

In a Letter to a Friend.*

YOU desire my sentiments on Dr. Hopkins's 'Enquiry into the nature of true holiness.' I am very ready to give them: but to enter into particulars, and speak on them with exactness, capable of enduring critical investigation, would engross too much time and attention, to consist with my other engagements. I can, therefore, attempt no more than some general thoughts which occurred to me while reading.

I trust I am as decidedly averse to a *mere* selfish religion as Dr. Hopkins; and I see clearly the radical defect of Mr. Hervey's scheme, and of many statements by modern divines on this very account. Many of them, I hope, feel and act inconsistently with their own system or language, otherwise I could not think well of their own state or character. But I am of opinion, that Dr. Hopkins pushes, or rather is *pushed* by *our artful enemy*, into the opposite extreme. *Incidit in Scyllam qui vult vitare Charybdim.* It seems to me that he does not sufficiently mark the distinction between man, as God made him, and man as he hath

* The letter was not in the least intended for publication.

made or marred himself, so that he speaks sometimes as if God's work in creation needed mortifying and crucifying, as well as Satan's work and image in the soul. When, however, he comes to answer objections, and deduce inferences, he appears to me to give up most of what he had been contending for, and most of what he maintained different from others; and, I own, I think he often writes obscurely and ambiguously, and with much repetition.

I would, however, make a few short observations on his book, of a more particular nature.

1. Suppose his system to be speculatively or philosophically true, it is too refined and subtile for by far the greatest part of mankind, even if they had leisure and advantages for such studies. A man must be naturally of a metaphysical, abstract genius, exercised by use, before he can clearly take in his sentiments, and apply them to experience and practice. I own, that through disuse, I am grown so dull, that I am sometimes at a loss to understand his meaning and his plan. I am not disposed to quarrel with every thing exact or systematical, as metaphysicks; yet still abstract, subtile schemes, not directly grounded on scripture, should not be deemed essential to christianity; and I cannot but think that numbers hold the substance of truth, and possess *disinterested* religion, who could not understand, or would be stumbled at his book.

2. Probably the divine perfection, as well as the divine essence, and the truths and commands of God, may be in their own nature simple, one, uncompounded, &c. but yet it is plain, that this is not the best way

of proposing them to the minds of men, for it is not the Lord's way of doing it. He speaks to us as children, as weak worms, who must see things in compartments a little at once, and who are overwhelmed and confounded by the immensity of divine things, as they are in themselves; and it is best for us to "speak "as the oracles of God." Infidels and Socinians have made their advantage of the philosophical notion of *simplicity*, and so have explained away the scriptural language of the justice, wrath, and vengeance of God. I acquit Dr. Hopkins of every meaning of this kind, and with my metaphysical spectacles, I can see dimly, or I think I see, simple benevolence in God to be equivalent to wisdom, truth, holiness, and even avenging justice; and simple benevolence in man, to be repentance, faith, fear of God, love of God, love of the brethren, compassion to sinners, patience, temperance, sincerity, fortitude, &c. Yet it will never be generally perceived by mankind: and I apprehend that none of us are so familiar with such subjects, as not to be helped in our meditations, by considering the divine perfections *distinctly*, as well as in harmony; and the different parts of the christian character in like manner.

3. I cannot but think, that, when our minds are exerted to the utmost upon this scheme, still love to the spiritual excellence of the divine character, his image in his people, and gratitude for *personal benefits*, are not sufficiently prominent. I do not think the love of the saints is sufficiently distinguished, by Dr. Hopkins, from benevolence to sinners; and though complacency and gratitude may perhaps be implied in

benevolence, yet they are better spoken of distinctly.

4. Dr. Hopkins's distinction between loving *self as self*, and the *love of ourselves*, is too nice for my dull faculties. In short, I cannot but think, after all, that we *ought to love ourselves as ourselves*, and I can form no idea of any other way of loving ourselves. But here seems the chief fault of his system. The scripture throws the blame on our love of the world, and the things that are in the world; our carnal mind, which chooses, relishes, and prefers the things of the flesh; our idolatry, in loving money, pleasure, honour, &c. more than God. We have committed two evils, "forsaking the Fountain of living waters, and hewing "out broken cisterns which can hold no water." Now, Dr. Hopkins applies all this to self-love, and scarcely mentions the idolatrous love of the creature, of which the scripture is so full. While self-love seeks its good in the creature, it is downright *selfishness;* the glory of God, and the good of others, except for our own sake, are wholly neglected: men stand in each other's way; the divine law stands in the way of them, and every species of ungodliness and unrighteousness is the consequence. When men, in religion, seek eternal salvation, merely as a deliverance from misery and the enjoyment of happiness suited to their taste; their selfishness and idolatry remain. But when they seek the Lord, and return to him, and seek happiness in his favour and service, in renewal to his image, beholding and adoring his glorious excellencies, and enjoying his love; they are cured of selfishness and idolatry; they love themselves wisely, and in a holy manner; and they never seek their own happiness so

entirely, as when they most readily labour, venture, suffer, and deny themselves to glorify God, and do good to his creatures.

5. Self-love, in this case, receives a new direction, and is exercised in a new manner; but it is *gratis dictum* to assert, that it is an opposite principle. Thus it subsists in angels, thus it subsisted in man, created in the image of God. Sin did not destroy this principle, and implant another, but gave it a perverse direction, from which grace recovers it.

6. If we condemn all self-denial for the sake of our own salvation, we must condemn much of the scriptures; yet, proud self-justifying self-denial, in hope of a carnal heaven, is downright selfishness.

7. If there were a hell, in which God and men were loved, and God adored in holiness, grace might lead a man to be willing to go thither for the general good of the universe; but to be willing to be eternally unholy, *i. e.* eternally to hate God and man, is a singular effect of disinterested love of God and man; and the scripture requires it not: Christ exemplified it not. He knew he should be glorified when he submitted to be made a curse for us.

Upon the whole, I think Dr. Hopkins generally strains the bow till it breaks. He represents that which, if attainable at all, must be the summit of created holiness, as possessed by men who doubt whether God be not their enemy; and, in many things, his theory is too fine spun, though much of it is radically true and important.

England, Sept. 1796.

Remarks on the Theological Magazine.

AS to the Theological Magazine, I am apt to say, 'Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy.' The Americans, at least some of them, seem in danger of corrupting christianity by philosophy, as much as Origen and Clemens Alexandrinus did of old. From some things, perhaps, carried rather too far by Edwards, and Bellamy, some of them take occasion to introduce notions subversive of their most important principles: nay, the negative side of the modern question, (respecting faith being a duty) is evidently implied in some of the papers signed *Speculator:* and one of them on *Blame* almost equals even Mr. Hume himself, who says the want of honesty, of sense, and of a leg, is equally criminal. Excuse my freedom, and impute it to my fear of extremes, and of speculating away the gospel, and running into *Scepticism* or *Fatalism.*

England, Sept. 1796.

Remarks on Hopkins vindicated.

To the Editor of the Theological Magazine.

SIR, *London, May* 18, 1798.

IN your Magazine for March and April, 1797, there is a paper entitled, "Dr. Hopkins vindicated," in which I am in some measure concerned. A friend sent me "Dr. Hopkins's Inquiry into the Nature of "True Holiness," and some other American books, desiring me to give him my opinion of them. Accordingly, having marked a few particulars as I read, which I felt an objection to, I sat down when I had done, to write a familiar letter on the subject, amidst a hurry of other engagements; and, without stopping or transcribing one line, I filled two sheets with my remarks. I had not the least idea that I was writing for the press, and much less could I have conceived that my hasty thoughts were destined to meet the critical inspection of the acute metaphysical theologians of New-England. But I soon learned that some, at least, of my remarks had crossed the Atlantick; and, at length, I was astonished, and rather displeased, at seeing them printed in your Magazine.

The vindicator of Dr. Hopkins has compelled me to this vindication of myself, by his animadversion on my introductory observation, in which I referred

solely to the haste in which I was about to write my sentiments, and not at all to the superficial consideration with which I had formed them. Had the vindicator lamented, that men, destitute of the requisite talents, or whose *views* in these respects biassed their *reasonings*, would engage in such discussions, I should have held my peace; but *superficial investigation preceding an apparently dictatorial decision* constitutes a criminality, of which I do not wish to be suspected by my American brethren. For considerably more than twenty years I have given up myself to such studies, and have at least been sufficiently addicted to metaphysical speculations. The religious people in Old England look upon me as a New-England divine, which is to them, in general, no recommendation: I have been much indebted to Brainerd, Edwards, Bellamy, and others; and I yet regard them with veneration, as writers of deep discernment and eminent piety, though I have some few reserves. Had I been writing to some of my countrymen, I could and should have filled my paper with observations on the excellency of that kind of religion contained in Dr. Hopkins's work, when compared with the laxity of principle too prevalent here; but I had no occasion to do this, for my friend well knew, that our sentiments on that head entirely coincided. Yet this circumstance gives my observations rather the appearance of *carping* and *snarling* than of fairly estimating the worth of the work.

I am by no means disposed to enter the lists with the veteran disputants of North-America; yet I cannot retract what I have advanced—"What I have "written, I have written," let it shift for itself; though

had it been intended for publication, it would have assumed a very different appearance. I observe, however, that the vindicator, (page 268, 5th Obj.) substitutes the word *selfishness* for *love of one's self;* and this gives an erroneous view of my real sentiments. By *selfishness* I mean *foolish*, *apostate*, *carnal self-love;* and had Dr. Hopkins used this word only, my trouble would have been spared. But I contend, that *love of one's self*, even *as one's self*, is not radically evil, but existed in man as God at first made him; as indeed it must in every creature, holy or unholy. It is the mere appetite for happiness, and no more morally good or evil than hunger, or thirst, or any other natural appetite: but it becomes *holy* or *unholy* accordingly as it seeks its gratification in knowing, loving, glorifying, and enjoying God, and in doing good; or in obtaining and enjoying the creature. In the former direction it cannot be inordinate; in the latter it becomes so immediately, when our own indulgence in the smallest degree interferes with our obedience to God. Self-love under a holy direction, is distinguishable from love to God, and from love to his creatures: but, like three distinct streams that approach each other till fully united, these holy affections approximate as sanctification advances; and when that shall be perfected, they shall completely unite in one river flowing on to all eternity. It is indeed said, that man does not now exist as God made him; but surely we may distinguish between Adam's nature before he fell, when God pronounced him very good, and his nature after he fell, and became desperately wicked. That which was natural before the fall cannot want

mortifying, but that only which the fall made natural. *Selfishness* is the *depravation* of self-love, as *intemperance* is of *thirst*.

I am not yet convinced, that a man would shew his love to God by a willingness to be eternally and perfectly unholy and miserable; that is, to hate God for ever. If this were possible, would it not be a most awful instance of "doing evil that good might come?" Surely, such speculations carry things to an extreme; and it is evident, even from the reasonings of those who favour them, that they have a very slender and ambiguous support in scripture. The apostle says, "He laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay "down our lives for the brethren:" but he seems not so much as to have thought of an infinitely greater sacrifice, which true love would be willing to make if necessary. In places where the doctrine of election is deemed so essential, that a person can hardly be a christian who does not hold it, I have often observed individuals reconciled to it, not by a real submission to the righteousness and sovereignty of God, but by an idea that they themselves are elect. And may not the sentiment, 'that a willingness to be lost for ever, 'if the Glory of God and the good of the universe 'require it, is the essential distinction between holy 'and selfish religion,' give occasion to a similar self-deception, and lead men to work up their minds to a persuasion that they are thus willing, as the best evidence of their safety? "The heart is deceitful above "all things;" and "we are not ignorant of Satan's "devices!"

I am very far from being an enemy to free enquiry,

provided it be conducted with humility, sobriety, and reverence of God. But *suppositions*, sometimes put for the sake of argument, concerning his decrees, operations, and dealings, make me shudder, as if I heard blasphemy. Surely poor short-sighted worms ought to be impressed with deeper awe of the infinitely holy and glorious majesty, before which Angels veil their faces, than to use such language, and indulge such reasonings, in speaking of God! I must also think, that we should be careful not to intrude, with *boldness*, not to say presumption, into things not seen, and not adventurously to deduce probable consequences from revealed truths. I mean not to offend; but it appears to me, that the pride of reasoning and confident speculation is as much the danger of religious people in North-America, as antinomian laxity and selfishness is of those in Old England. The *rationale* of Christianity, as some call it, if carried further than a sober and full understanding of the scriptures, will prove a dangerous matter. Religion came from God in full perfection, and can never be *improved*, though it may be *spoiled*, by philosophy: and the nearer our sentiments and expressions accord to those of the holy prophets and apostles, the purer will our religion be. The pride of self-wisdom is as congenial to our fallen nature, and as opposite to christianity, as any other kind of selfishness: "for the wisdom of this world is foolish-"ness with God."

The bible is "a light shining in a dark place." It says a little concerning the entrance of sin, and the ruin of our race; but it gives us full and clear instructions in respect of our guilt, danger, refuge, and path.

By this light I would walk, and with it be contented, till I come to that better world, where full day will be poured on all the ways and works of God. I once thought myself competent to reason on many subjects, which I now feel to be far too wonderful for me. I am afraid of desiring to be "wise above what is written," "lest the light that is in me should prove darkness." "*Secret things* belong unto the LORD our God; but "the things which are revealed belong to us and to "our children for ever, that we may do all the words "of this law." For, "the fear of the LORD, that is "wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understand-"ing." And the apostle, having gone to his limits in imparting what he had received, exclaims, "O the "depth of the riches both of the wisdom and know-"ledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, "and his ways past finding out! For who hath known "the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his coun-"sellor?"

Allow me to add, that, in my humble opinion, your Magazine would be more useful if more devotional and experimental subjects were introduced, and such as were suited to influence the affections, and keep alive a tenderness of conscience; while our Magazines would be much improved by substantial doctrinal and practical instructions. There are, however, in most of them, very useful papers; and I cordially wish you success in the name of the Lord.

To the Editor of the Christian Observer.

SIR,

HAVING observed the impression made on a full congregation by the baptism of a child during the service, and by a serious address in the Sermon to parents, sponsors, and all baptized persons, concerning their obligations and duties, and their criminality, if they did not attend to them; I was led to conclude, that the publick administration of this ordinance, during divine service, (which except in cases of necessity, our Church inculcates most decidedly,) would, if generally adopted, be productive of most important advantages: and, consequently, I was induced to conclude, that the too common custom of baptizing on other days, except the Lord's day, or if on the Lord's day, after the congregation is separated, was, at least foregoing those advantages.

The Anti-pœdobaptists do all baptize *very publickly*, and this administration of baptism, according to their sentiments, is very impressive, and has a great effect in producing a favourable opinion of their mode of baptizing, in the minds of those who have not maturely weighed the subject: besides giving the minister an occasion of addressing the consciences, the judgments, the passions, or even the prejudices of the assembly. But the retired and concealed way, now generally adopted by the ministry of our Church (contrary to

the rubrick undoubtedly) seems to say to the people, 'It is a mere form; there is no need to make it public; no instruction can be grafted on it; it needlessly lengthens the service.' And the *unchristian* custom of making baptisms an occasion of a sensual dissipated feast, which is too generally connived at, gives countenance to this conclusion, and advantage to those who administer the sacrament in another manner, less scriptural, I apprehend, in other respects, but more scriptural in that it is made a publick, serious, and religious service. Indeed I am fully convinced, that the public administration of infant baptism, with apposite instructions to all concerned, would do more to establish its scriptural authority than all the controversial publications which have appeared on the subject.

But this is by far the least part of what I would wish to point out. A great deal has been said of baptismal regeneration. If we say that this *always* and of course, takes place, however the sacrament is administered, not to adduce other objections, it is plain that we return to the *opus operatum* of the Papists. Yet far be it from me to deny, that regeneration may accompany baptism, and that it frequently does when properly administered. Now I was peculiarly impressed on seeing baptism administered during the service with the idea, that a considerable number of christians were, all over the congregation, uniting in prayer, that the child might be baptized by the Holy Spirit, and made an heir of eternal life. Surely, thought I, this way of administering the sacred ordinance gives the most scriptural ground to hope that the inward and spiritual

grace shall accompany the outward and visible sign: and I cannot conceive that the private mode of baptizing can afford a ground of confidence, which, either on scriptural or rational grounds, can be put in competition with it.

But, above all the opportunities that the publick administrations of baptism gives to the minister of addressing all descriptions of persons in his congregation on their respective duties, and their failures in them, appear to my mind of the greatest importance; I have long complied with the general custom, and have never, for at least twenty-five years, baptised a child during divine service: but I must allow that, having once been present where a child was thus baptized, the ceremony being followed by an appropriate address, I was then convinced, that by private baptism (in which I include baptizing in the Church, except during divine service on the Lord's day or on some publick occasion,) many advantages of exhorting and establishing our congregations were lost; and many advantages given to those who endeavour to draw our people from us.

If these loose hints be worth inserting in the Christian Observer I shall be glad to see them there, in hopes that the subject may be more maturely handled by some other correspondent, and that the attention of the ministers of the establishment may be called to it.

Your constant reader.

To the Editor of the Christian Observer.

THE *Serious Inquirer* in your number for January last, seems to have received some instructions concerning "faith in the righteousness in Christ," which many, who are zealous for that doctrine, do not insist upon; and which are not, as they conceive, at all essential to it or indeed implied in it. Content with the language of the Apostle "we are made the righteousness of God in him;" or that of our articles 'we are 'accounted righteousness before God, only for the 'merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by 'faith, and not for our own works or deservings;' we do not say, that "we have perfectly fulfilled all righ- "teousness in him;" which phrase does not so well express the idea of *imputation* as that of *personal obedience*.

Perhaps your correspondent does not exactly mark the line of distinction between being *accounted righteous* and being *made holy:* for if he did, he would hardly suppose, that being *accounted righteous* implied 'being really without spot before God;' for this expression, as I understand it, signifies being perfected in holiness.*

* Eph. v. 27. Col. i. 21.

I consider the righteousness of Christ, or his personal obedience to the divine law, apprehended by true faith, as so imputed to the believer, that it constitutes his title to eternal life, which neither 'oblivion of sin, nor full acceptance of duty' could do. It is the meritorious ground of his being dealt with as an heir of eternal happiness; notwithstanding all his sins and imperfections: for eternal happiness is properly the reward of perfect righteousness. But this act of God, in "justifying the ungodly," and imputing "righte-"ousness without works," neither alters the rule of duty, nor the nature of a man's actions; while it increases the believer's obligations to obedience, and aggravates the guilt of his subsequent sins; and while God looks on believers as in Christ, in respect of justification; he views their character and actions in all respects as they really are in themselves. "The right-"eousness of God," which "is *unto* all and *upon* all that believe," is merely a provision for the honour of the divine law and justice, in making sinners heirs of that happiness, which is properly and exclusively the reward of perfect obedience. The justified believer is also adopted: he is a son and heir: and the title to his inheritance is given him, on the ground of his brother and surety's meritorious services, and for his sake. But this no more renders personal obedience or sanctification unnecessary, than the entail of an estate renders obedience to a parent, or a good state of health superfluous. In these respects the obedience of Christ is not, and cannot be, imputed; or if it could it would be of no use.

But he, who has the title to the inheritance, under

the hand and seal, so to speak, of his heavenly Father, still remains an accountable creature, fallible and peccable, depraved, (though not enslaved to sin,) exposed to temptation; and consequently, he is often, more or less, betrayed into sins, negligences, and omissions. He has, however, a tender conscience, and a holy taste; and thus when he reviews his conduct, he feels ingenuous sorrow and shame, for having offended his heavenly Father, he repents, and humbles himself with tears and prayers, he welcomes rebukes and corrections, kisses his chastening rod, craves forgiveness, and blesses the gracious care of him, who "restores his soul, and leads him in the paths of "righteousness for his name's sake." No man, who is wholly a stranger to this experience, has scriptural proof that the righteousness of Christ is in any sense imputed to him; and all who are deeply acquainted with these conflicts, and this consciousness, must be convinced, if they have a right view of the divine holiness, and the perfection of the divine law, that all their obedience needs forgiveness, and is utterly insufficient and unsuitable to form a title to eternal glory. From first to last they must "count all things but "loss; that they may win Christ, and be found in "him, not having their own righteousness, which is "of the law, but that which is through the faith of "Christ, the righteousness which is of God by "faith."

But your correspondent objects to what is said respecting the *title to heaven*, and says that 'every loy-'al subject is not admitted to live at court.' As, however, I really do not understand this latter part of his

argument I hope I shall be excused for not attempting an answer. I have, for a long course of years, counted the righteousness of Jesus Christ, imputed to the believer through faith, and sealed on his heart by the progressive sanctification of the Holy Spirit, the only *meritorious* ground of hope, that he shall at last inherit eternal life, of which the very imperfection of his faith proves him unworthy: yet he will daily feel that very sense of sin, those challenges of conscience for omissions and transgressions, and that need of daily and earnest prayer for pardon, through the atoning blood, which your correspondent speaks of with great feeling, but thinks inconsistent with a state of complete justification. I am persuaded, however, that we do not mean very differently, though the unscriptural views given of imputed righteousness by some, seem to excite unscriptural prejudices against it in others. But I must add, that I cannot think any loyal subject of Christ will be willing *always* to be absent from court; and that, through the righteousness of Christ and the sanctification of the Spirit, he will be expecting shortly to arrive in the presence of God where is fulness of joy, and to share those "pleasures which are at his right hand for evermore."

To the Editor of the Christian Observer.

THE duty of trusting the promises and providence of God in giving to the poor, even when one's circumstances are moderate and precarious, especially on urgent occasions, and the still higher duty of relieving parents in distress, as far as children have it in their power, seems to be generally acknowledged: yet it is to be feared, that few so entirely rely on the promises of God on this subject, as to risk much in obeying his plain commands; and those who do, are often censured by their brethren as imprudent. It is to be feared also, that to expect any remarkable interposition of Providence in case of poverty, occasioned by such conduct, however consonant to the divine precepts, would scarcely be exempted from the charge of enthusiasm. I have, however, known several instances, in which these promises of scripture have been *literally* understood, relied on, and fulfilled, even beyond expectation. The case that follows, fell under my own immediate observation.

A woman servant who was past the prime of life, in an inferior station, but much respected for her well known piety and integrity, had saved a little money from her wages, which, as her health was evidently on the decline, and there was reason to think she

could not long support the fatigues of her situation, would probably soon be required for her own relief. Thus circumstanced, she heard that her aged parents, by unavoidable calamity were reduced to extreme indigence, and at the same time she had reason to fear they were strangers to the comforts of true religion. She accordingly obtained leave to visit them; and making the best use of the opportunity, both shared her little with them, and used her utmost endeavours to make them acquainted with the consolations and supports of the gospel, which she did apparently with some success. She was afterwards remonstrated with by a religious acquaintance, who observed, that, in all probability, she would herself soon stand in need of all the little she had lain by. But to this she replied, that she could not think it her duty to see her aged parents pining in want, while she had more than was needful for her present use, and that she trusted God would find her some friend if he saw good to disable her for service.

According to her faith, so it proved to her. She continued to assist her parents, till their death; soon after which event, she was so entirely deprived of health as to be utterly incapable of labour. But when nothing but a workhouse was in prospect for her, God, in a wonderful manner, raised her up friends where she least expected them. For nine years she has now been very comfortably supported in a way she could never have conceived, and circumstances have at length been so ordered that her maintenance to the end of life is almost as much ensured as any thing can be in this perishing uncertain world. So remarkably hath God

verified to her his gracious words, " Trust in the " Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, " and verily thou shalt be fed."*

Extracts from two letters to a minister, who asked the author's opinion on a sermon, on Nahum ii. 1, *which he was requested to publish.*

LETTER I.

AN early answer to your question, can only contain an extempore opinion; and I feel myself incompetent to decide on the subject. I own I am not very partial to *accommodation*, and thought, while you were preaching, that if you had said the same *important things*, from a text in which they were evidently contained, they would have been more convincing, impressive, and effectual: but then I observe, that a great majority is against me in this respect.

The ingenuity, that deduces important instructions from a text, which seems not to contain any thing to *that special point*, excites the approbation and admiration of many: but some think it unwarranted, and that

* Ps. xxxvii. 3.

it gives too much scope for fancy; and tends too much to take men off from the plain meaning of scripture, to hunt after such allusions, till they forget the *Go, and do likewise*, as has been exceedingly the case in the good Samaritan. Your allusions, however, though I own I could not find the ground of them in the Text, were of a *practical nature and tendency;* and thus calculated to produce good among those, who have a taste for accommodation.

LETTER II.

IF I had not considered you in a very different light, from that in which I do some preachers, in whose sermons imagination and accommodation predominate, I should have evaded the question, or declined giving an answer. But I deem you to be of so right a spirit, and your aim to be so simple, that any thing of this kind, which gives umbrage to some persons, and is not unfrequently ascribed to a wrong cause, must arise from an error of judgment, which may, without much difficulty, be rectified, if indeed we, who judge thus, be in the right.

Your sermons always have a *good tendency;* as such, I must give my approbation, leaving every man to his own method of attaining his object: though I may think that method is not the best of which he is capable. I am fully satisfied, that you are capable even of *excelling*, in that way which seems to me most suited to communicate solid instruction—to produce

abiding conviction—and so to silence objection, by "sound speech which cannot be condemned, that "they who are of the contrary part may have nothing "to say against it:" for I have heard you, and others, who are no more favourable to accommodation than I am, have heard you, and have wondered that you did not understand where your *forte* lay.

When you take a plain text, full of matter, and from the *real* meaning of the text, raise doctrines, draw conclusions, explain, illustrate, and apply the subject, there is great weight in your manner of preaching; which the fertility of your invention and liveliness of imagination, kept in due bounds, render more interesting to the *many*, without giving just ground of umbrage to the *few*. But, it appears to me and to others, that you frequently choose Texts *suited to give scope to the fancy*, which is constituted the interpreter instead of the judgment; and that you thus discover allusions, and deduce doctrines and instructions, true and good in themselves, but by no means contained in the text, nor, indeed, easily made out in the way of accommodation. In this case, your own vigour is principally exerted in the exercise of the imagination; and, while many hearers are surprised, amused, and delighted, their understandings, consciences, and hearts are not addressed or affected, by any means in so powerful a manner, as by a plainer subject.

What St. Peter says of *prophecy*, that it is "not "of private interpretation," is true of every part of scripture: the Holy Spirit had, in every part, one grand meaning, and conveys one leading instruction;

though others may, by fair inference, subordinately be deduced. This is the real *spiritual meaning*, which we should first of all endeavour to discover, as the foundation of all our reasonings and persuasions. We should open, alledge, argue, enforce, apply, &c. from this *mind of the Spirit* in scripture; nor is any passage fit for a text, properly speaking, which does not admit of such an improvement of it, in its real meaning. But that, which you seem to call the '*spiritual* '*meaning*,' is frequently no more, than a *new meaning* put upon it by a lively fancy.—Typical subjects, indeed, have a spiritual meaning, and in another sense, under the literal meaning; being intended by the Holy Spirit, to shadow forth spiritual blessings under external signs; and some prophetical visions are enigmatical, and the spiritual meaning is the unriddling of the enigma.—Parables, and such parts of scripture as the Canticles, are of the same nature. But in all, the judgment should be the expositor, not the fancy, and we should inquire what the Holy Spirit meant, not what we can make of it.

But there are many scriptures, that have no other meaning, than the literal; and which are to be improved, not by finding out a new meaning and calling it spiritual; but by trying what useful instruction we can deduce from the plain sense of the passage. To illustrate my meaning, let me bring forward your text as an instance. Nabopolazar, King of Babylon, who, in conjunction with Cyaxares, King of Media, subverted the Assyrian Empire, is supposed to be meant by the *dasher in pieces;* and your accommodation of this title to the French was fair.—But the latter part of the

verse is a challenge to the inhabitants of Nineveh, to do their utmost to withstand the fierce conqueror; with an intimation, that it would be all to no purpose. "Keep the munition; watch the way; make thy loins "strong; fortify thy power mightily." For, as the Lord had not spared the offending Israelites, but had punished them by the Assyrians, who cruelly intreated them; so he would not spare the Assyrians, but would destroy Nineveh by the Babylonians, who would fully avenge on the Assyrians their cruelties to Israel. Now, I think, the accommodation of this, to our watching, praying, and using all means of averting the wrath of God from a guilty land, with hopes of success, must appear far fetched to those, who study the scriptures carefully; and who would say, 'The instruction was good, but what right had the 'preacher to put such a sense on the words? At this 'rate, we may make the scriptures mean what we 'please, by putting our own sense on any passage; 'and there will remain no certainty in interpreting 'scripture, but it will be equally easy to prove error 'as truth from thence.' In fact, I thought I could see, that you had some difficulty in making the allusion out; and was too much engaged in that pursuit, to bring it so much home with energy to the heart and conscience as you would have done, if you had said the same things from the words of Joel for instance, chap. i. v. 12—14 or 17; or those of Isaiah, i. 16—18. Nor let it be forgotten, that many hearers of the gospel, love best to have evangelical truths proposed without much application, for reasons best known to themselves, or rather to the Lord.

My dear Sir, I am so deeply convinced, that this way of accommodation is capable of very dangerous abuses, and has been so abused to very bad purposes, by those, who make divisions and deceive souls, that I grieve when any person of real piety and respectability gives countenance to it; and I have so high an opinion of your integrity, benevolence, desire of glorifying God, and of doing good, and of your talents likewise, if properly exerted, that I have long wished to discuss the subject with you.

You have a popular turn; you will be sure to have hearers; and if I could drop a hint, which should render your ministry more unexceptionable and useful, I should be glad to be a prompter, when unable to be an actor. I have more need for spurs than a curb-bridle, in respect of the imagination; but I will venture to say, I speak the sense, not of two or three fastidious criticks, but of all the best judges in London, that you need a strong curb, when your imagination is concerned in preaching; for I have heard many persons, who are not unfavourable to your ministry, and who greatly love you, lament it; though, like myself, they did not plainly say it to you.

It appears to me, that you are too much dejected about it; and ready to despond, without any occasion. Your heart is upright; your doctrine sound; your aim and dependence simple: there needs *no revolution* in your preaching in any respect: a few hints, duly and constantly kept in view, would remedy all, that your *candid* friends object to; and, as to the rest, you cannot expect to please them. I should hint to you, 1st, the propriety of commonly taking plain and full Texts,

which evidently contain the substance of what you mean to set before the people. For taking difficult Texts has been so abused, that judicious persons are almost always ready to ascribe it to a bad motive. 2. Of first enquiring after the primary meaning and intention of the Text, by examining the context accurately; and then considering what subordinate uses may be made of the general subject. 3. To aim at keeping judgment and imagination in their proper places;—judgment as expositor,—imagination merely to illustrate and give animation to the decisions of judgment. 4. To be upon your guard, when thoughts, which strike your fancy by novelty, occur to you; they are seldom so solid as brilliant; and sometimes have little but novelty to recommend them, as a sober review of them may often convince us.

PRAYERS.

PRAYERS.

A Morning Prayer for a Family.

O MOST glorious and gracious God, whose kind providence has protected us through the night, and brought us in peace to meet together this morning; assist us, we earnestly beseech thee, to present our unfeigned praises and thanksgivings, and to unite in fervent prayer and supplication before thy mercy-seat.

But, who are we, O thou high and lofty One, who inhabitest eternity, whose name is Holy, that we should venture into thy awful presence? Even the Seraphim veil their faces in deep humility, when they present their adorations before thy throne—And we are not only immensely beneath them in our nature; but alas, we have been guilty of base ingratitude for thy bounties, and of multiplied acts of rebellion against thee, our Creator and Sovereign—"We have forsaken thee, "the Fountain of living waters," to seek happiness from the broken cisterns of earthly enjoyments and possessions!—We have proudly rejected thy easy yoke, and become slaves to divers lusts and plea-

sures!—We have refused thee that reasonable tribute of worship and love, which it would have been our privilege to render; We have broken thy commandments in thought, word, and deed, and have abused thy gifts to the dishonour of thy name.

Thus we would with shame confess, we are fallen under condemnation and into bondage, from which we cannot deliver our own souls: and we may well be confounded, when we would lift up our hearts unto thee. "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquity, "O LORD, who can stand? But there is forgiveness "with thee," and plenteous redemption in thy beloved Son. Through his atoning sacrifice, and prevailing intercession, we would approach thy throne of grace; and while we smite on our breasts and say, "God be merciful to us, vile sinners!" we would unite our penitent confessions with lively faith and hope, and bless thee for these unspeakable benefits. Oh give us true repentance and living faith; convince us more deeply of our sinfulness; and discover to us every thing in our hearts and lives, which displeases thee: that we may approach thee in genuine poverty of spirit, and with sincere and fervent longings after those blessings which we ask with our lips. Enlighten our understandings, that we may more clearly perceive the nature and glory of thy gospel: and more fully "know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ "whom thou hast sent." Teach us to count all things but loss, that we may win Christ, and partake of his salvation.—May thy holy word, which we daily study, be treasured up in our memories, written in our hearts, and made legible in our tempers and conduct. Oh, do

thou rectify our mistakes, deliver us from prejudices, "make us to be of good understanding in the way of "godliness," and "uphold our goings in thy ways, "that our footsteps slip not."—We beseech thee, O thou God of peace, that by faith in the blood of thy beloved Son, we may enjoy the comfort of thy reconciling grace, and sweet tranquillity in our hearts and consciences; and may our hope of forgiveness from thee render us ready to forgive others, and form our dispositions to gentleness and love. Glorying in the cross of Christ, may we be crucified to the world, and the world to us. May we be clothed with humility, walk before thee with vigilance and circumspection, and serve thee in the spirit of adoption. Enable us, we beseech thee, for thy sake, to "do unto all men, as "we would they should do unto us," to live in peace one with another, and while we have time, to do "good "unto all men, but especially to them that are of the "household of faith." May thy saving grace "teach "us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to "live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present "world:" may we be content with such things as we have; accommodate ourselves to the station allotted us; conscientiously attend to our proper duties; and watch against covetousness, anger, envy, and all other sinful passions.—Oh, may we be indeed the followers of the lowly Jesus: may we walk as he walked; act in wisdom towards all around us; and improve our several talents to the glory of thy great name: and thus may we "wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus "Christ unto eternal life."

We most humbly beseech thee, O Father of mer-

cies, that thou wouldst graciously look upon our beloved friends and relatives. Bring home to thy fold such as still wander in the ways of sin and folly; and communicate all seasonable help and comfort to those, who know thy name, and love thy salvation. Recompense with thy choicest blessings all them, whose hearts thou hast disposed to be kind to us; may they and their dear children and relatives be made partakers of thy saving grace; may their souls be as a watered garden; may their temporal comforts be increased, their trials sanctified, and all their endeavours to do good be crowned with abundant success. We would also, most gracious Lord, pray thee to bless all the ministers of thy gospel; to send forth labourers into thy harvest; to prosper every method of sending thy saving truth to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death; to lift up a standard against the prevailing infidelity and impiety of the age; to stem the torrent of licentiousness; and in all respects to purify, bless, and enlarge thy church, and to fill the earth with the glory of thy name.

Regard with thy special mercy our favoured but ungrateful land: though our iniquities testify against us; yet for thy own name's sake, and the honour of thy gospel, continue to us the blessed light of thy truth, and the means of grace that we enjoy. Preserve us from publick calamities, and put an end to those enormities, which call for thy vengeance upon us.—Bless our king and all the royal family with thy choicest mercies; and direct all employed in publick affairs to those measures, which may most promote our best interests and thy glory. Oh, incline and teach all or-

ders and ranks of men amongst us to fill up their several stations in a suitable manner, and to serve their generation according to thy will. Send peace in our time we beseech thee, O Lord: [Say to the destroying sword, it is enough, return into the scabbard.] Over-rule all changes in kingdoms and nations, to the furtherance of thy gospel, and the establishment of thy kingdom all over the earth. Compassionate, O merciful Lord, all who are afflicted, indigent, oppressed, enslaved; send them effectual deliverance, and give special consolations to thy tempted and persecuted children.

Hear, we beseech thee, these our prayers and supplications: be with us in all the employments and companies in which we may this day be engaged: may we act in them, as under thine eye, and as it becomes thy redeemed people: and may we be habitually prepared for death and judgment. These and all mercies we, unworthy sinners, humbly implore, for the sake, and through the merits and mediation of thy son Jesus Christ; to whom, with thee, O Father, and the Holy Spirit, we would ascribe co-equal and eternal praise and adoration. Amen.

An Evening Prayer for a Family.

O THOU Giver of every good gift, thou Father of mercies, and God of all consolation; we desire to close this day with thy solemn worship. Accept, we beseech thee, our unfeigned thanksgivings, for the continuance of our lives, our health, our senses, our limbs, and our rational powers; for the protection and provision thou hast hitherto afforded us; and for all the general and special benefits we enjoy. We would consider them as coming from thy hand, and as the fruits of thy unmerited kindness to us thy sinful creatures. But above all, we are bound to thank and bless thee, for the redemption of the world by thy beloved Son; and for all, the blessings of that new covenant, which he purchased by his death, and is exalted at thy right hand to bestow on all that believe. We thank thee for thy written word and thy preached gospel; and for all the abundant spiritual advantages, with which we are favoured. We praise thee for thy long-suffering towards us, when we disregarded the message of reconciliation, and continued in disobedience; for delivering us in dangers, and recovering us from sickness, when we were wholly unprepared for death; and even when we used our lives and health, in sinning still more against thee! "It is of thy mercies only that "we are not consumed, because thy compassions fail "not." And if at length we have been renewed to re-

pentance, and enabled to believe thy gospel, and love thy holy ways; to thee, O Lord, we would ascribe all the glory of this blessed change. "What shall we then render to the Lord for all his benefits?" Help us, we humbly pray thee, not only to offer at thy mercy-seat our feeble sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving; but to present ourselves also as living sacrifices devoted to thy glory; and to bless thee with the more decided language of unreserved obedience.

And while we rejoice in our privileges and mercies; help us, O Lord, to remember the inexpressible sufferings of the divine Saviour, when "he bare our sins "in his own body on the tree, that we being dead un-"to sin, should live unto righteousness." Oh! grant that, looking to him whom we have pierced, we may mourn for our crimes with unfeigned sorrow; may become more deeply penitent, and be more determined in crucifying the flesh with all its affections and lusts: and may the love of Christ constrain us henceforth to live more entirely to his glory. Here, at Emmanuel's cross may we daily learn self-denial, deadness to the world, patience, meekness, forgiveness, humility; and thus find our hearts prepared to renounce our own ease and interest, in order to honour our Redeemer, and subserve the comfort of those whom he condescends to call his brethren. May we learn "to "keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace;" and, looking to him who endured the cross, and despised the shame, never be weary and faint under any trials or discouragements.

Help us, O gracious God, this evening so to ex-

amine our ways, and renew our repentance; that we may have peace with thee and our consciences, through the atoning blood, before we close our eyes in sleep: and do thou extinguish every emotion of resentment or corrupt affection, which the events of the day may have excited; that we may go to rest in sweet charity with all mankind.

Prosper, O Lord, all our undertakings, as far as is good for us; and especially all our endeavours to acquire, or to communicate, the knowledge of thy truth and will. Bless thy holy word, which any of thy servants may have spoken in publick or private; crown all their labours with success, and fill their souls with joy and consolation. Enlarge and purify thy church, and let thy grace and peace be multiplied to all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity. Remember with thy choicest mercies all that pray for us, or desire a place in our supplications; and whenever we meet with dear absent friends, may we see new cause, and feel renewed dispositions for thankfulness.

And now, O gracious Father, while we commend ourselves and each other to thy special protection this night; "teach us so to number our days that we may "apply our hearts unto wisdom:" and grant, that whether we live or die, we may be thine for ever. Hear us, we humbly intreat thee, and exceed all we ask, or can conceive, according to the riches of thy mercy in Christ Jesus. For whom we bless thy name, and to whom with thyself, and the eternal Spirit, we would ascribe all glory, praise, adoration, and thanksgiving, now and for evermore. Amen.

Another Morning Prayer for a Family.

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, we thy unworthy creatures desire to bless and thank thee, for thy gracious protection, and the refreshment of sleep during the past night; and the renewed gift of life and a measure of health this morning. We would gratefully acknowledge likewise the conveniences of our dwelling and temporal provision; the comfort of kind friends and domestick peace, and all the security and tranquillity which we enjoy in this favoured country. We confess, O Lord, that we are unworthy of the least of these thy mercies: and we beseech thee, enable us to shew our unfeigned gratitude, by alacrity in every part of thy service, and a proper use of all thy benefits.

But we are bound especially to bless and praise thy holy name, O most gracious Father, for the salvation provided for us in thy son Jesus Christ our Lord. Without this inestimable benefit, no temporal peace or prosperity could have eventually profited us. By thy righteous sentence we are doomed to die. Our present joys and sorrows, cares and pursuits, must soon vanish like the dreams of the past night; we shall shortly open our eyes amidst the important realities of the eternal world. And, Oh! if thou shouldest, in that unchanging state, deal with us in strict justice accord-

ing to our deserts; we could no more avoid final condemnation, than we can escape the stroke of death.

But, blessed be thy name, O Lord, our reprieves from the grave may now be improved as opportunities of seeking deliverance from the wrath to come, and of securing an incorruptible and eternal inheritance. Enable us therefore, we humbly pray thee, to regard with solemn attention thy message of reconciliation, through the mediation of Christ, and by faith in his atoning blood. Enlighten our minds to a clear perception of the nature, glory, and inestimable value of thy great salvation; and fill us with an admiring sense of thy condescending and compassionate love to lost sinners, in this stupendous method of shewing them mercy, and giving them eternal felicity. Here may we see the harmonious display of thy justice and grace, thy holy abhorrence of iniquity, and thy tender love to condemned transgressors. Help us, we humbly beseech thee, to discover, in some measure, that manifold wisdom, and all those glories, which fill the angelick hosts with admiring love, that we may learn on earth the worship of heaven, and here lisp our feeble praises "to him who loved us, and washed us "from our sins in his own blood." Oh, enable us to give such diligence in making our calling and election sure, that we may always be confident; knowing that when we shall be absent from the body, we shall be present with thee in glory. And if any of us have hitherto neglected the one thing needful, resting in a form of godliness, or in any way deceiving ourselves; may we be stirred up without delay to seek first thy kingdom and thy righteousness, and to subordinate all other pursuits to this grand concern.

Teach every one of us, O merciful God, to serve thee in our different employments; doing all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and using our possessions, or improving our talents, as those who duly consider how soon it may be said, "Give an account "of thy stewardship, for thou mayest no longer be "steward." Enable us, we intreat thee, so to act at all times and in all things, that we may joyfully anticipate the summons, and humbly hope to be received by the Saviour with that welcome, "Well done, good "and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy "Lord." Grant us, O thou Fountain of life, such consolations in communion with thee, as may render us superior to the frowns and smiles of the world, and fix our affections on things above.

Teach us also to profit by all thy rebukes and chastisements; that every painful feeling may serve to humble us, to wean us from earthly things, to embitter sin, to endear the love of our suffering Redeemer, to soften our hearts into compassion towards the afflicted, and to bow our wills into submission to thine appointments—And as thou, O glorious Lord of all, art pleased to permit us to call thee our heavenly Father; grant, we intreat thee, that the lively exercise of all filial affections, by the sacred influences of the Spirit of adoption, may fully testify that we are indeed the children and heirs of God. Oh, let it be the ardent desire of our inmost souls, that thy name should be hallowed, thy kingdom established, and thy will done on earth, as it is by all the inhabitants of heaven.

We pray that thy blessed gospel may be effectually preached to all the numerous and populous nations,

which now sit in pagan darkness, or under Mahometan delusion. May plans be formed in wisdom, and executed with zeal, for the accomplishment of this great design. O raise up, qualify, and send forth under thy special protection, proper instruments for this arduous, but honourable service. Pour out thy Spirit from on high upon the nations; that mountains may flow down at thy presence; and that difficulties, now deemed insuperable, may be effectually removed. Oh, prepare the way for such extensive displays of thy glorious grace, by purifying the whole visible church, from all superstition, false doctrine, and unchristian practice; by uniting believers in holy love and harmony; and by rendering all the pastors of thy flock, wise, disinterested, humble, faithful, zealous, and laborious. Stop the fatal progress of infidelity and apostacy from Christ, which mark this degenerate age and nation: and raise up able champions for thy truth, who may contend earnestly and effectually for the faith once delivered to the saints.

Bless the places of publick education; and grant that men may continually be sent forth from them, qualified for these and other important services. Endue with wisdom, animate with zeal, and arm with patience, such persons as, amidst difficulties and disappointments, are endeavouring to promote the welfare of mankind, and to open the way to the spread of thy gospel: raise them up many helpers, and at length crown their efforts with complete success.—Teach, O Lord, all true Christians, to act consistently in their various circumstances and trials; and enable them to adorn thy gospel and rejoice in thy salvation: and

bless their children also, that they may serve thee in their days, and transmit thy truth to future generations.

Oh, vouchsafe thy special grace to all our dear relatives and friends, whatever else thou mayest see good to withhold from them. Bestow thy blessing on all those whom thou hast placed in authority over us; and honour them as thy instruments, in promoting the best interests of these nations. O thou God of peace, be pleased to terminate the ravages of war, and extend thy compassionate regard to all, who in this or any other way, are exposed to those complicated miseries, from which we are mercifully exempted.

Enable us now, we beseech thee, to enter on our several employments, in submission and obedience to thy will, and dependence on thy grace. May we be preserved from the snares of the world, and defended against the assaults of Satan: may we watch over our hearts, govern our passions, and bridle our tongues, as under the inspection of thine all-seeing eye; and be helped in all things to glorify thy name, through Jesus Christ, thy beloved Son, and our Mediator and Redeemer.—Amen.

Another Evening Prayer for a Family.

O THOU most glorious God, with whom a thousand years are as one day, and who dwellest in light inaccessible to mortal men: the return of night reminds us how short our time is; and how soon we must finally close our eyes on all things here below, to open them in the eternal world. Our days glide away almost unperceived: Oh leave us not to neglect the important work of life, through attention to the trifles with which we are surrounded! We feel all things here on earth to be vanity and vexation: our pains are many and increasing; our pleasures few and wasting. "Surely "man walketh in a vain shew! he disquieteth himself "in vain! He heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who "shall gather them!" "For we are consumed by "thine anger, and by thy wrath we are troubled! thou "hast set our iniquities before thee, and our secret "sins in the light of thy countenance." Teach us, therefore, O merciful God, so to meditate on the shortness, uncertainty, and vanity of things temporal: and on the reality, nearness, and importance of things eternal; that we may indeed be strangers and pilgrims on earth, and may seek a heavenly inheritance, with our warmest affections and most persevering diligence. Do thou make the thoughts of death and judgment so familiar to us, and so impressive on our hearts; that they may put vigour into our prayers; may excite us to earnestness in all the means of grace; may make us

decided in renouncing every idol and iniquity; and may influence us so to act in all things, as may afford us comfort upon the bed of death.

Enable us, O Lord, to mark thy hand, and to submit to thy righteousness, in all the troubles of life, and in all the painful consequences of our sins. Give us such a knowledge of thy holy law, and of its spiritual and reasonable demands; that we may become fully sensible of our exceeding sinfulness, and be deeply humbled before thee in unfeigned repentance. May we never attempt to cover our transgressions, or to justify our conduct in thy sight; but may we so judge ourselves, that we may not be condemned at thy awful tribunal. Help us, O gracious Lord, to believe thy gospel with living faith; and continually to come unto thee, as the Fountain of life and felicity, through the righteousness and redemption of our great High Priest, who ever liveth to make intercession for us. And give us, we intreat thee, that confidence in thy pardoning mercy, and that love, gratitude, and zeal, which may prompt us to unreserved obedience, and make us stedfast, unmoveable, and always abounding in thy work.

But, O thou heart-searching God, the imperfections and defilements of our best days and services are all open to thy view! Were the rest of our past lives buried in eternal oblivion, and an account of this one day required from us: our vain thoughts, idle words, and wrong tempers; our selfish desires and motives, and manifold omissions of duty, would leave us speechless and self-condemned before thee. Help us then, we earnestly intreat thee, to apply to our consciences

that atoning blood, which cleanseth from all sin: and neither leave us to discouragement through unbelief, nor suffer us to abuse thy grace by any allowed disobedience.

Whatever we have this day attempted, which had a beneficial tendency, do thou, O merciful Father, be pleased to prosper by thy blessing; and prevent the ill consequences of our errors and offences. Sanctify to us thy dispensations, and our own experience: and help us to thank thee with unfeigned hearts, for the unmerited mercies and comforts, with which we have been favoured. Bless, O Lord, all endeavours to spread thy gospel, and to promote the peace and happiness of mankind: and remember with peculiar regard such as are labouring in remote inhospitable regions, to make known thy salvation among poor benighted Pagans.

We commend ourselves, and all belonging to us, unto thy gracious protection. Thou art ever present, and knowest all things; thy majesty and condescension, thy justice and compassion, are alike infinite and adorable. "Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou "art exalted as Head over all." But we are exposed to countless dangers, and are wholly unable to defend ourselves. Be thou our strong Tower, and help us to take refuge under the shadow of thy wings. Preserve us from outward calamities, and from the assaults of our spiritual enemies. Help us seriously to enquire, whether we are indeed prepared to meet our God, should we be called hence this night? That we may be enabled to close our eyes, in well-grounded assurance, that death is ours; because we are Christ's,

and possess the meetness for the incorruptible inheritance. Should we be spared, to awake in peace, and arise in health with the returning day: enable us, we beseech thee, to attend on thy worship and service with alacrity and gratitude. And thus may we "wait "all the days of our appointed time, till our change "come," with calm submission, vigilant circumspection, and patient continuance in well doing. Vouchsafe us, O gracious Father, these and all other mercies, for the sake of thy beloved Son Jesus Christ; whom, with thee and the eternal Spirit, we would adore as the God of our salvation, both now and for evermore.

Another Morning Prayer for a Family.

O ALMIGHTY and eternal God, we would humbly attempt to begin this day with worshipping thy great and glorious name. Thou art worthy of universal and everlasting adoration and thankful praise. Thy nature is incomprehensible, thy perfections infinite, thy goodness inexhaustible. Thou hast created all things; thou upholdest them by the word of thy power; and every one of thy works proclaims thy glory. Thou openest thy hand, and fillest all things living with plenteousness: and so abundant is thy goodness, that even the sinful children of men are in-

vited to take refuge under the covert of thy wings! Thou art " in Christ reconciling the world unto thy-" self:" upon thy mercy-seat thou waitest to be gracious; and thy glorious wisdom, holiness, justice, and truth, are adored by the hosts of heaven, whilst thou dispensest pardons and showerest down blessings, on poor sinners who call upon thee. " Thou art exalted " above all blessing and praise." How then shall we, poor sinful worms, offer any acceptable tribute to thy name? Thou mightest justly reject both us and our worship, as below thy notice, or deserving thine abhorrence: yet thou condescendest to say even of us, mean and guilty as we are, " Whoso offereth praise, " glorifieth me!" Yea, " thou inhabitest the praises " of Israel!" Enable us, therefore, we humbly beseech thee, O merciful Father, as a holy priesthood, to offer continually such spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, as are acceptable to thee through Jesus Christ; and do thou graciously accept our bounden duty and service, not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences, through the mediation of thy well beloved Son.

But the more we meditate on thy glories and on our obligations, the viler we appear in our own eyes; remembering our manifold rebellions and base ingratitude. Our sins are indeed innumerable and inexcusable; and we would abhor ourselves on account of them, repenting in dust and ashes.—To us belong shame and confusion of face, because we have sinned against thee: but to the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness; so that our deepest humiliation may be united with prevailing hope and animating confi-

dence. But while we rejoice in Christ Jesus, as "made "unto us Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, "and Redemption;" may we expect the largest blessings from thy free bounty, fully convinced, that we merit nothing but thy wrath and indignation. Oh, grant we beseech thee, that our consciousness of guilt may endear to us the love of Christ, and may teach us forbearance and compassion to the vilest and most injurious of our fellow sinners. Enable us in this manner to exercise patience and contentment; form our hearts to teachableness, and simplicity of dependence on thy promises; and teach us readily to sit down in the lowest place, and in honour to prefer others to ourselves.

O gracious Saviour, we beseech thee to establish thy kingdom, and sway thy sceptre in our hearts, and reign Lord of all our affections: baptize us with thy sanctifying Spirit: cleanse away every pollution: consume the dross of our grovelling desires and imaginations: and transform us into thine own holy image. Teach us more fervently to love thy holy name; and inspire us with pure and ardent zeal for thy glory. Communicate to us heavenly wisdom, and give us a lively relish for spiritual pleasures. Grant, we pray thee, that we may be able to distinguish things which differ, and to approve such as are most excellent. Help us to walk in wisdom towards them that are without; and to understand and practice our several duties towards all with whom we are connected, and among whom we live. Teach us, how we may escape the snares, and resist the temptations of Satan: strengthen us with all thy might by thy Spirit in the inward

man, that we may overcome the world, avoid its pollutions, renounce its friendship, and refuse conformity to all its sinful customs. Enable us to keep under the body and bring it into subjection; that so we may not use even lawful things in an inexpedient and injurious manner: and help us, in every respect, to fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life.

We commend to thy care and blessing, O gracious Lord, all who are dear unto us. Teach us, we beseech thee, with persevering zeal, to use all proper means of doing them good, and of winning upon such as still neglect thy great salvation. Bless thy whole church. Endue thy ministers with wisdom, clothe them with righteousness, and make them valiant and zealous for thy truth. Enable thy people to rejoice in thee: let thy grace be sufficient for them in all their trials and temptations; give them victory in every conflict; and prosper all their endeavours to glorify thy name, and do good to mankind. Send forth thy light and truth to the nations: dispel the dark clouds of idolatry, impiety, superstition, and infidelity; and set up thy kingdom of peace and righteousness throughout the earth. Continue, we humbly beseech thee, to bless our land with peace and liberty, and the light of thy gospel; and may effectual measures be taken to stop the progress of wickedness and ungodliness; that so iniquity may not be our ruin. Enrich our king, and all connected with him, or placed in authority under him, with thy choicest mercies: and do thou so direct the publick councils, that such wise and salutary measures may be adopted, as thou wilt bless to the preservation of domestic harmony; the restoration and es-

tablishment of peace among the nations; the reformation of our manners, the revival of true religion, and the success of thy gospel in other parts of the world. Visit with thy tender compassion and saving grace all the sons and daughters of affliction. While thy judgments are abroad in the earth, may the inhabitants learn righteousness: and do thou, O God, be pleased to frustrate the designs of all those, who are enemies to peace and true religion.

Be graciously present with us, O merciful Father, in the various employments and occurrences of the day; may we serve thee in the discharge of every duty, from pure evangelical motives, and with uprightness and fidelity. Leave us not, we intreat thee, to grieve thy Spirit, to wound our own consciences, to dishonour our profession, or to unfit ourselves for presenting our evening sacrifice of solemn worship. But grant, that "whether we eat or drink, or whatever we "do; we may do all to the glory of thy great name."

We beseech thee, O heavenly Father, to accept with mercy these our supplications; and to do for us exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think, through Jesus Christ, our great High Priest and Advocate. To whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be honour and glory, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

A Family Prayer for Saturday Evening.

O THOU eternal God, in whom we live, and move, and have our being; enable us we beseech thee to close this week in that manner, which shall be most profitable to ourselves, and most honourable to thy name.

We have no occasion, O most righteous and holy God, to review the years which are past, in order to find cause of humiliation in thy sight: every day and every week suggests abundant matter for painful reflections, and adds to our conviction, that "we are all "as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses as "filthy rags." O Lord, if thou shouldest mark iniquity, who could stand? Enable us, therefore, to confess our sins with ingenuous and unreserved sorrow and shame; to own that they are more in number than the hairs of our head, and a sore burden too heavy for us to bear; and to present ourselves, in deep contrition at thy throne of grace, in humble faith and reverent boldness, through our great and compassionate High Priest, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Do thou apply the atoning blood to our consciences this evening, to purge away the guilt of the past week; that we may go to rest in peace, and not carry the guilt of any unrepented, unpardoned sin, into the ensuing week, to mar our com-

fort, or blast our endeavours to glorify thy name. O thou Author and Finisher of faith, help us against all the incursions of unbelief: leave us not to a dead faith and presumptuous hope; and let us not be discouraged by needless fears and scruples. Grant us peace and joy in believing; and let the love of God, shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, assure us that our hope shall never cause us to be ashamed.

While we would thus seek forgiveness of all that is past, through the blood of sprinkling; enable us also to return thee our unfeigned thanks for the mercies of the past week, and of our whole lives. Blessed be thy name, O Lord our God, for the continuance of life; the preservation, [or recovery,] of health; exemption, [or relief,] from pain; the use of our limbs, senses, and faculties; the plentiful supply of our wants; the kindness of our friends, and the restraints put upon our enemies and upon wicked men; for our domestick comforts; and our privileges in this land, still favoured with liberty, peace, and the light of heavenly truth. Oh that we were more disposed to bless thee for thy goodness, and for thy wonderful works toward the children of men! We thank thee, for our abundant opportunities of religious improvement; for every degree of inclination to attend on them; and for all the benefit we have thus received. We ascribe it to thy special grace, that we have ever attended to thy gospel; and that we have been kept from turning back into the world, or from being entangled in any destructive or injurious delusion: nay, that we are not at this moment sitting in the seat of the scornful, or walking in the paths of vice and impiety. Another

week hath now been added to the season of thy long-suffering, and to our season of preparation for eternity! through another week we have obtained help of God, and been in some measure enabled to cleave to thee! Accept our cordial thanks and praises for all thine unnumbered mercies, and grant that our future lives may evince our sincerity.

Whatever any of us, O gracious Father, have attempted in thy service during the past week, do thou render effectual by thy blessing. If [by conversation, or letters, or] in any way we have endeavoured to be useful to our brethren, or our fellow-sinners; give, we beseech thee, the desired success. Though the seed sown may have been "as bread cast upon the waters;" let it not perish, but "be found after many days." And prosper the labours of those, who with greater zeal and ability, or more favourable opportunities, have sown the good seed of divine truth in any part of the world.

If, O Lord, we have presented any believing and fervent prayers before thy throne of grace; either in the closet, the family, or in publick worship; for ourselves, our beloved relatives and friends, and our Christian brethren dispersed abroad in the world; for our country, our rulers or teachers, and the different orders and ranks of men in the community; for the distressed in mind, body, or estate; for the oppressed and enslaved; for the peace of the world, the success of the gospel, and the establishment of thy kingdom: do thou graciously remember and answer all these our supplications; pardon the sinfulness cleaving to them,

and far exceed them all, for the sake and honour of thy beloved son.

Bless to us, we beseech thee, the means of grace we have this week enjoyed: and grant that, through thine assistance, we may remember and be edified by all we have read or heard from thy holy word. Sanctify also to us the dispensations of thy providence: teach us to profit by all thy chastisements; and to learn gratitude and confidence in thee, by all thy mercies: and may even the experience we have of our own weakness and folly, excite us to more fervent prayers for wisdom, strength, and grace, according to thy precious promises.

And now, O merciful God, we beseech thee, to prepare our hearts for the approaching day of sacred rest: and teach us so to arrange all our temporal concerns, that our thoughts may not be occupied, our attention distracted, nor our minds ruffled by them, when we would wait on thee in thy holy services. Let us not deem thy sabbaths a weariness; but our delight, our privilege, and great advantage. May the care of our own souls, and of the souls of those who belong to us, sweetly occupy the hours of the day. By self-examination, and meditation on thy word, may we obtain increasing acquaintance with ourselves, our spiritual estate, the progress we have made, or the loss we have sustained, in this important concern. Enable us, we beseech thee, to humble ourselves before thee in true repentance, and cordially to renew our acceptance of thy salvation; and, while we wait on thee, may our strength be repaired; may every grace be brought into vigorous exercise; and our

knowledge of thy truth and will in all respects enlarged. Assist us in thy publick worship, and favour us with thy special presence and blessing. May thy people, with whom we worship, be refreshed, comforted, and sanctified in thy courts; and grant thy special assistance and blessing to thy ministers, in their work and labour of love. Oh, that increasing numbers may be added to thy churches, of such as shall be saved; and many able and faithful labourers sent forth into the harvest; and may the Sun of righteousness diffuse his healing influence, wherever the sun in the firmament enlightens the nations with his beams. Hear us, O merciful Father, in these our supplications; take us under thy protection this night; fit us, both in body and soul, for the duties of the ensuing day, and by them prepare us for thy eternal sabbath, for the sake of Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord, to whom, with thee and the Holy Spirit, One God in three Persons, even the God of our salvation, be glory and honour from all creatures, now and for evermore. Amen.

A Family Prayer for the Lord's Day Morning.

O THOU God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of all that truly believe in him; we meet together this morning to thank and bless thee, for sparing us to see another day of sacred rest; and to implore thy gracious aid in keeping it holy to thy name. Alas, how many sabbaths have some of us wasted in vanity and folly, in sloth or worldly concerns, in frivolous company, amusement, or animal indulgence! And since we have known something of thy salvation, how very imperfectly have we obeyed thy command, of sanctifying thy holy day! If thou shouldest enter into judgment with us according to our deserts, our transgressions in this single point would leave us speechless under thy awful sentence of condemnation. But though we have thus been ungrateful and perverse; though we have robbed thee of thy hallowed time, and of the glory due to thy name; yet, we beseech thee, magnify thy mercy in pardoning our sins, and in giving us thy grace, that we may henceforth walk in newness of life.

We bless thy name, O Lord our God, that thou hast appointed this season of rest from our worldly pursuits; and made this provision for our spiritual advantage: and we thank thee, if our hearts are in any degree inclined to avail ourselves of so invaluable a

benefit. Help us, we beseech thee, to remember thee as our Creator, who, having in six days made this world, and man to inhabit it, didst pronounce the whole *very good;* and didst rest on the seventh day, with full satisfaction and ineffable delight, in this display of thine eternal power and Godhead: and didst command man to keep it holy; to contemplate thy glories, to celebrate thy praises, and to rejoice in thy goodness.—But alas, how soon did sin mar thy good work, and derange this happy plan! And how can transgressors rejoice in a holy God, whose wrath they have incurred, and from whom their hearts are alienated? Blessed be thy name, O Lord, for the revelation of thy mercy in Christ Jesus, "the Lamb slain from "the foundation of the world!" Now sinners may approach and rejoice in God their Creator, as their reconciled Father and Friend! We would therefore adore the displays of thy glory in the works thou hast made, and in the course of thy bounteous providence. All thou doest is worthy to be had in honour; and our obligations to thee as our Creator and Benefactor can never be sufficiently acknowledged. But when we contemplate the stupendous plan of redemption, and view the incarnate Son of God dying for our sins, and rising again for our justification; we feel that this is, to us sinners, the most interesting and endearing of all the discoveries thou hast made of thyself; as well as the fullest display of the harmonious glories of thy character, in the view of thy whole intelligent creation. Oh, enable us, we pray thee, by the teaching of thy Holy Spirit, so to meditate on these subjects, especially on this season of sacred rest; that our hearts

may be humbled in repentance, inspired with confidence, filled with admiring love and animating gratitude, and prepared for rendering thee our tribute of praise and thanksgiving. But, O Lord, the subject is too vast for us! Thy love passeth knowledge! We cannot worthily praise thy glorious perfections. Yet we beseech thee, in thy infinite condescension and fatherly compassion, to accept our feeble efforts, and to help us to love thee more, and praise thee better.

Grant, we beseech thee, that we may hallow this thy sacred day with reverence, devotion, and alacrity. Exclude from our thoughts and hearts all worldly cares; and let no circumstance arise, or person intrude, to interrupt us in its important and delightful duties. May all the hours, which can be spared from matters of *real* necessity, be spent in works of piety and charity; may a spiritual mind render them pleasant to us; and may our converse and social intercourse be seasoned with piety, and promote mutual edification. Vouchsafe us thy special blessing in studying thy word, reviewing our past lives, calling to mind thy mercies, examining the state of our souls, and pouring out our hearts before thee.—May we count a day spent in thy courts better than a thousand; and be glad when it is said to us, let us go unto the house of the Lord. Leave us not to admit of any vain excuse, for not attending on thine ordinances: but grant that we may ever feel more disappointment when confined from thy worship, than when prevented from an expected interview with our dearest friends.—We would go, with the desire of our souls, to meet thee accord-

ing to thy promise: and we beseech thee, enable us by faith to realize thy glorious and gracious presence, and solemnize and encourage our hearts; Oh grant us the assistance of thy Holy Spirit in every part of the sacred service: raise us above that dulness and languor which so often oppress us; and preserve us from the intrusion of vain and wandering thoughts. May our confession of sin, our prayers and supplications, our praises and thanksgivings, be the language of our inmost soul, and an acceptable sacrifice through Christ our Lord.

Prepare our hearts, O merciful Father, as good ground to receive the good seed of divine truth: and may thy word, read and preached, be heard by us in humble teachableness, mixed with faith, and applied to our own cases and consciences. Oh deliver us from all our prejudices; remove every veil which closes our understandings, and every bias that warps our judgment. Instruct us where ignorant, rectify our mistakes, convince us of our sins, confirm our faith, encourage our hopes, enliven our affections: and thus fit us for serving thee, with wisdom and zeal, in the several stations in which we are placed. *[And when some of us shall meet at thy table, give us thy special help; that in deep repentance, lively faith, and fervent love, we may remember our dear Redeemer's sufferings and death, renew our acceptance of his salvation, render our tribute of grateful praise, and yield ourselves up to thy service, as "bought with a price to glorify

* On the days when the Lord's Supper is administered.

" thee with our bodies and spirits, which are thine." Thus may we 'feed on Christ in our hearts by faith 'with thanksgiving;' and be strengthened for every future service and conflict, by this "Bread of life which "came down from heaven."]

Bless, we beseech thee, O gracious Lord, those who shall assemble with us in thy courts; [and those who meet with us at thy table;] vouchsafe to thy believing people all those good things, which we have asked, or should ask for ourselves. Compassionate those, who have hitherto been formal worshippers, and strangers to thy saving grace. Awaken the careless, undeceive the deluded, guide the enquirer, comfort the broken-hearted, confirm the wavering, and excite to diligence such as have been lukewarm and slothful. Assist and prosper thy servants, who labour among us in the word and doctrine. Give them wisdom, zeal, faithfulness, tenderness, and compassion. Help them rightly to divide the word of truth, and to speak such things as suit the various characters and cases of the congregation. Give them much comfort and success in their work; and grant them many seals to their ministry, who may be their joy here, and their crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus. Remove every hindrance to their usefulness; and bring forth many from all around, whom thou wilt make partakers of thy saving grace, and instruments of diffusing the light of thy truth, and of handing it down to future generations, that the children who are yet unborn may praise the Lord. Vouchsafe the same blessings to all faithful pastors and their congregations; and grant that all who are called ministers of Christ

'may be illuminated with the knowledge of thy truth,' and both by their doctrine and example make it known, and recommend it to mankind.

Send forth, O thou Lord of the harvest, more labourers thoroughly furnished for thy work. Enlighten the dark parts of the earth with thy saving grace. Remember, with special regard, such as are employed in distant regions and arduous circumstances, to make known thy gospel; comfort their hearts, prosper their endeavours, and raise them up many helpers. Purify thy church from scandals and heresies. Cause divisions among Christians to cease. "Multiply mercy, "grace, and peace, to all that love the Lord Jesus in "sincerity;" and by the prevalence of thy gospel terminate wars all over the earth.

Look in mercy on such as are confined from thy courts by sickness or family afflictions; and by thine immediate teaching and blessing, make up to them the want of publick ordinances. Pity the multitudes, who are every where profaning thy holy sabbath, and give them repentance unto salvation. Remember all with whom we have at any time "gone to the house of God in company; and let our prayers, though now separated, be accepted for each other. Be with us through the day. May we be edified, and thy name be glorified; and may we meet in the evening, with peaceful consciences and thankful hearts. Hear us through the merits and mediation of thy beloved Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

A Family Prayer for the Lord's Day Evening.

O THOU most holy and merciful God, we, thine unworthy servants, desire this evening to review, as in thy presence, the day past; humbling ourselves for our sinfulness, and thanking thee for all thy loving kindness.

When we endeavour to examine any part of our conduct, or to compare it with thy holy law: we never fail to discover abundant cause for humiliation. Alas, not only have our actual transgressions and omissions been innumerable and aggravated: but each of us has cause to exclaim, when contemplating thy glories, "Woe is me for I am undone, because I am "one of unclean lips, and mine eyes have seen the "King the Lord of Hosts!" O God! our very worship is so defiled and defective; that, instead of atoning for our past sins, or recommending us to thy favour, it needs thy gracious forgiveness, and must be washed in the blood of Christ. Pardon then, we beseech thee this evening, whatever thy holy eyes have seen amiss in the duties of the day: the wanderings of our hearts, the coldness of our affections; our want of reverence, love, and gratitude; the weakness of our faith, the wavering of our hope; the mixture of self-seeking and regard to men, with which our religious services have been contaminated. And grant that all our supplications and thanksgivings, as far as they have been up-

rightly presented before thy throne of grace, under the influences of thy holy Spirit, may be mercifully accepted, through the mediation of our heavenly Advocate. We desire also, O Lord our God, to crave thy fatherly forgiveness of every thought, word, and action, by which we have grieved thy Spirit, dishonoured thy name, or counteracted the gracious designs of this thy holy day. Wash us thoroughly from all our sins, in the fountain of atoning blood; and vouchsafe us the comfort of thy pardoning love, and the enjoyment of thy peace, before we close our eyes in sleep.

Suffer not, O merciful Lord, the ordinances of this sacred season to rise up at last in judgment against us, to our confusion or condemnation: let not thy word of grace be a savour of death to any individual now before thee. But, O thou Giver of every good gift, teach us to improve our advantages; and render the *transient* seasons or public ordinances a *permanent* blessing to our souls. Let us not rest satisfied, with having been serious, impressed, affected, or comforted, when hearing thy word; or with conscious sincerity in our worship [or in our engagements at thy table:] but let us so meditate upon these things with self-application and fervent prayer; that our judgment may be matured, our spiritual wisdom and discernment increased, our faith and hope established, our affections purified and invigorated, and our wills rendered more submissive, by every attendance on the means of grace. Thus enable us to "give thee more "earnest heed to the things we have heard; last at any time we should let them slip." Suffer us not to

be as " children tossed to and fro with every wind of " doctrine:" but make us such Christians, as " by " reason of use have their senses exercised to discern " good and evil." [And may we also remember that the vows of God are upon us: and in all the transactions of life duly consider, that we have avouched the Lord to be our God; and ourselves to be his people, as redeemed unto him by the blood of his Son.] May we carry the instructions of thy word, and the savour of thy holy ordinances, along with us, into all the secular affairs of the ensuing week; to teach us wisdom and circumspection, to arm us against temptation, to be the light of our steps, and the strength of our heart. Oh grant, that as the face of Moses shone, when he came down from the mount: so when we go from communion with thee, in thy solemn worship; our light may shine before men, to the glory of thy name, and the adorning of the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

Prosper, we beseech thee, the labours of all those who have any where, this day, preached the word of truth in simplicity and godly sincerity. May thy people be edified in their most holy faith, and sinners in great numbers be converted unto thee. And, where serious impressions have been made, let them be rendered effectual unto eternal salvation. Hear all the supplications, which have this day been presented before thee by thine assembled people; for themselves, their children, and relatives; for thy whole church, for all ranks and orders of men, and for the whole human race; according to their several wants, trials, or circumstances. May thy cause every where prevail; may

thy truth run and be glorified. Oh stop the progress of false doctrine, and lift up a standard against infidelity, impiety, and licentiousness: and let peace, and the gospel of peace, fill the whole earth.

And now, O heavenly Father, we commend ourselves to thy keeping this night. Watch over us and our habitation. Give us the comforts of refreshing sleep; and defend us against all enemies, especially those that would injure our souls. And grant, that by hallowing thy sabbath on earth, we may be rendered more and more "meet to be partakers of the inherit-"ance of the saints in light." May all our days and weeks be thus begun, continued, and ended with thee: and grant that all we, who now unite in prayer on earth, may at length meet before thy throne in heaven, to sing thy praises and triumph in thy love, through the righteousness, atonement, and intercession of our great High Priest, and to the honour of his name, who is, with thee, O Father, and the Holy Spirit, God over all, blessed for evermore. Amen.

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